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## THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

APRIL 2 1982

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## The platform of untruth

By Geoffrey Hosking

EDITH ROGOVIN FRANKEL:  
*Novy Mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature, 1952-58*  
206pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£19.50.  
0 521 23438 7

GRIGORI SVIRSKI:  
*A History of Post-war Soviet Writing: The Literature of Moral Opposition*  
Translated and edited by Robert Dessax and Michael Ulman  
456pp. Aen Arbor, Michigan: Ardis.  
0 88233 449 2

KATERINA CLARK:  
*The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*  
293pp. Chicago University Press.  
0 225 10766 3

Soviet literature is a strange and fascinating spectacle for Western observers. All those authors, to start with, eight thousand of them in the Writers' Union, and thousands more free-lancing, writing in the Soviet Union's dozens of languages with the prospect of generous print runs and a secure standard of living. The political leadership seems to take them seriously, to judge by the occasional *celebré* which bursts into the Western (but not the Soviet) press. And the Soviet public actually reads them, to judge by the speed with which their best works disappear from the bookshops. Would that Western writers could say the same. And yet these same Soviet writers are subject to a formidably repressive system of censorship and political control, which makes it uncommonly difficult to attain to a standard higher than tedious mediocrity. Their best works may take years of exhausting struggle to publish - or may never reach the broad Soviet public at all, but dribble out in faded typescript copies, to be published eventually by an émigré establishment abroad. How do writers survive at all in these conditions? And go on writing? And what do they think they are trying to achieve?

These are questions which are tackled, in different ways, by each of these three books. One of the problems seems to be that literature is the last "cottage industry" in the Soviet Union. To be sure, writers have been collectivized in a formal sense in the Writers' Union. But the actual operation of writing still has to be carried on by the lone individual at his desk, and the end result, the book, though it may be printed in a hundred thousand copies, is still basically an individual product, of a kind which Soviet ideologists and production managers find difficult to fit into their "plan". Yes, ideologists too, because even the message or outlook of a work is supposed to be acceptable to the collective. Before publication, every typescript passes through dozens of hands, and has its individual quirks progressively ironed out.

Edith Rogovin Frankel in *Novy Mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature, 1952-58* examines the life of the basic ideological and production unit in Soviet literature, the "thick journals". In the West these venerable compilations, with their mixture of poetry, prose, criticism, reviews and social commentary went out with the nineteenth century. In Russia, however, they survived, and indeed were revived after the Revolution, because they seemed to suit the spirit of the times: writers liked to band together in like-minded groups, for mutual encouragement and protection, and in order to compete for official patronage, without which even the best of them could starve. Even when groups were suppressed and one all-embracing Writers' Union was created, these journals were still useful, both for their characteristic synthesis of literature and politics, and as a preliminary filter in the cumbersome process of official literary supervision.

With the diversification of cultural life in the "thaw" (which, as Frankel shows, slightly preceded Stalin's death and continued after it), journals reverted once again to the "group spirit", acting for writers and critics as a "family group", as sociologists call the informal mutual protection colonies which set a limit to the power of the would-be totalitarian state. The most celebrated example of this kind was *Novy Mir* in the 1950s and 60s, when, under its chief editors, Alexander Tvardovsky and Konstantin Simonov, it acted as a bastion of what Grigori Svirski in his introductory chapter calls the "literature of moral resistance". In the process the journal went through many vicissitudes, including the dismissal of Tvardovsky in 1954, and his return following the dismissal of

Simonov in 1958. Of the two, Frankel clearly has more respect for Tvardovsky, whom she regards as a man with his own programme and devoted to the interests of his "family", whereas Simonov, having sponsored a "thaw" which seemed to be in line with party policy in 1956, subsequently took fright and made 1957 one of the most colourless years in the journal's history. Frankel argues persuasively that Tvardovsky's return signalled the party's desire to establish a *modus vivendi* with the more liberal writers.

Frankel interviewed some of the former editors of *Novy Mir*, in order to give a rounded picture of the way the journal functioned as a social organism. She rebuts Solzhenitsyn's accusation (from *The Calf and the Oak*) that Tvardovsky was an aloof autocrat, out of touch with the other editors, the staff and the writers. On the contrary, she holds that Tvardovsky would make himself available to all who wanted to see him, that editorial meetings were informal and spontaneous, and that he enormously valued, in practice as well as in theory, the democratic spirit of the journal.

This spirit was the crucial factor in *Novy Mir*'s success. That was what gave the journal an *esprit de corps*, attracted writers to write for it, and induced readers to subscribe to it. Writers, apparently, would frequently drop in to discuss burning issues of the day, knowing that there they would find sympathetic and intelligent listeners. Frankel does not, however, really attempt to define what this spirit was, beyond noting that the "family group" was unified by "certain qualities of liberalism, of *poroyodnost*" (which means "do-ocracy", but transposed from the English public-school milieu to that of the progressive Russian intelligentsia). Works which were of high quality but did not conform to the journal's philosophy would be rejected (which is understandable, but indicative of the way in which "family groups" set up their own embryonic censorship). Solzhenitsyn was annoyed by this, and in his memoirs accused *Novy Mir* of following what was in effect only a slight variant of party orthodoxy. There is something in that charge, but *Novy Mir* in fact represented a very particular strand in the varied skein of Marxist-Leninist literary

practice. Tvardovsky (and Lakshin, perhaps the most talented literary critic on his staff) particularly valued Bolinsky, Nekrasov and the nineteenth-century radical democratic tradition. Like these forerunners, Tvardovsky believed that literature had a duty, through the truthful and critical reporting of social reality, to contribute to man's moral improvement and to help him build a more humane society. That is what moved Tvardovsky to value Solzhenitsyn's early work so highly, and to fight for its publication. For the same reasons, Tvardovsky remained fundamentally a realist in literary outlook; he had no liking for experimental stylistic techniques, and generally possessed a surer taste for narrative verse and prose than for lyric poetry. It would have been interesting to see in more detail how these attitudes were reflected in the variety of materials that appeared in *Novy Mir*.

One would also have liked Frankel to continue her study into the 1960s. This period was no less important in the life of the journal: until Tvardovsky's enforced resignation in 1970 it often fought single-handedly to maintain the values of the "thaw". The 1960s are, moreover, less well covered in this existing literature. Much of Frankel's chapter on the "literary process", which is well done, is in fact drawn from this later period. She assembles from a variety of sources impressions of the way in which a typescript passes through the stages of review, editorial consideration, censorship and, in controversial cases, discussion in one of the sections of the Writers' Union. It emerges quite clearly from her account that the people who run literature are the writers - or at least that sub-category among them who are entrusted by the Party Central Committee's Cultural Department with the job of administering literature. "Administering literature" - a terrible phrase! But it is essential in a collective society. What it means is taking decisions about what to publish, whom to reward with subsidies, advances, paid holidays or trips abroad and other such official perks. Being reliant on the party's patronage for their income and status, the literary bureaucrats (most of whom, though not quite all, are third-rate writers at best) are cautious about publishing anything that might cause trouble. It was they who finally

prevented the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *Concer Word* after it had been accepted by *Novy Mir* and approved by the prose section of the Writers' Union - Moscow branch (which contains a fair proportion of real writers).

*Novy Mir*, then, was no typical journal: on the contrary, it was the critical example which tested the working of the whole system. By examining it in the context of the "literary process", Professor Frankel, even though she does not cover her whole subject, makes a valuable contribution to our understanding.

Grigori Svirski in *A History of Post-war Soviet Writing: The Literature of Moral Opposition* has a much broader canvas. He takes an extreme view of the struggle: real literature in totalitarian conditions is "partisan warfare".

His study is autobiography as well as literary history, and it begins with the young Svirski himself in 1946, newly demobbed from the Red Army, walking past the statue of Rodin's Thinker in the courtyard of the Writers' Union building to attend a seminar at which one of his own works was to be discussed. The whole book is permeated by the idealism of that moment, the idealism of the man who had won a great victory over evil on the battlefield, and had now returned home to achieve the same on the campaign trails of the spirit. Such young men regarded the Soviet leadership as standing for the same basic ideals as themselves, but they were already indignantly aware of that leadership's harshness and authoritarianism, its misuse of privilege, its lavish squandering of manpower both in war and in peace. During the years which followed, if we are to believe Svirski, both their idealism and their moral revulsion intensified; they were sickened by the resumption of Stalinist terror, the deportation of whole nationalities, the campaigns against "cosmopolitans", Jews and "decadent" writers. The result was moral warfare, between literary bureaucrats anxious to suppress the truth and writers fighting to reveal it.

The story is a gripping one, and there is much to be said for Svirski's approach. Particularly valuable are his portraits of the "hatchet-men", as he calls the writers and pseudo-writers who "administer" literature. In

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the 1930s, of course, and again after the war, this function implied more than just distributing or withholding the goodies: it actually meant advising the political authorities about whom to arrest. Here the key man was Alexander Fadeyev, General Secretary of the Writers' Union in the worst years. Svirski's picture of him is fascinating: sharing a bottle of vodka with a writer who he knew was to disappear, rifling the desk of another condemned colleague in order to remove his own letters to him, and thus avoid being caught up in the meshes of his own making. In April 1936, when some of those he had betrayed returned from the camps, Fadeyev made a speech in which he tried to exculpate himself by reference to the "group spirit" in which they had all lived, to the "platform of untruth" which had won over hearts and minds. But his audience sat in grim and contemptuous silence, and a month later Fadeyev shot himself. As an acquaintance remarked, "Nothing is so fatal to a man as a base deed committed in error." Or, as he is said to have remarked not long before his death: "I thought I was guarding a temple, but it turned out in have been a latrine."

Svirski's minimalist approach, in fact, works well enough for the period just after the war, and perhaps for the early "thaw" of the 1950s. But on the whole literary history is not a good model for literary history. Battle normally have only two sides, and they are clearly distinguishable from one another. This fundamental over-simplification leads Svirski into confusion, especially when he treats of Russian nationalism. As a Jew — and one who has written vividly about the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union — Svirski understandably views Russian nationalism as the enemy. But he then goes on to identify it with the other enemy, the literary bureaucracy. This makes it difficult for him to write coherently and with sympathy about those writers of "moral resistance" who are themselves motivated by some form of Russian nationalism. He is inclined to attribute such views to official influence on these writers, an attempt to buy them off or divert them from their real task of speaking the truth. Things are much more complex in reality. To start with, Russian nationalism is by no means generally acceptable as an official ideology in the party hierarchy, nor in the Writers' Union: many authoritative Soviet ideologists regard an imperial, multi-national Soviet patriotism as more desirable. Indeed, they consider the Russian variety deeply suspect ideologically, since it can lead to glorification of the pre-revolutionary past — and even of the Russian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, there are many varieties of Russian nationalism, from the gentle Solzhenitsynian kind, which seeks to pull Russia back from dominating other nations and to effect a "moral revolution" to red-blooded anti-Semitic and militarist chauvinism. Lumping them all together, and then identifying them with Stalin, leads to gross distortion. Svirski's characterization of the journal *Nash Sovremennik*, for example, as Stalinist is pretty wrong: some of the sharpest criticisms of Stalin's policies, especially the mass collectivization of agriculture, have appeared in its pages.

Svirski seems, in fact, very ill at ease with the remarkable school of rural writers which arose in the 1960s, and to whom he actually devotes a full section of his book. On his account, it is very difficult to understand how these writers could make such radical criticisms of official rural policy and get them published. The only forerunner Svirski cites is Babel, whose few fragments on the collectivization of agriculture were in any case published too late to have influenced the emergence of the school. In actual fact, this trend was initially a by-product of the discussions which accompanied Khrushchev's agricultural reforms of the late 1950s and early 60s. Of course, it went much further than Khrushchev or anyone else originally intended, but this reflects partly the greater autonomy writers had won for themselves by the 1960s, and partly the confusion in party cultural policy, including the emergence of a Russian nationalist wing. But even this is not the whole explanation of the career of

Vasily Belov or Viktor Astafyev has developed according to its own inner dynamic, of which devotion to the Russian past and sensitivity to Russian peasant speech are important component parts. They are not writers to be bought off or to toe the party line, and their survival and continued publication (even if only after struggles) is an important fact about contemporary Soviet literary life.

Svirski's book, then, does not do justice to the nuances of his subject, nor does it give a three-dimensional view of the factors which generated the literature of "moral resistance". It is too passionate and engaged for that. Perhaps, in fact, it is best regarded as a participant's account, vivid but partial, rather than as literary history.

Katerina Clark's *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* is a useful corrective. It is strong precisely where Svirski's is weak. In fact, it breaks new ground in exploring a question which has always puzzled Westerners. If the main aim of officially approved Soviet writers is to conceal or to distort the truth, as Svirski argues, then how do they justify this to themselves? What motivates them to write at such length — is it only the prospect of generous royalties, paid according to the number of pages published?

Since none of them have left honest accounts of their creative processes, Professor Clark tackles the question through the texts themselves, the major Stalinist novels. She approaches them not as one normally would modern Western literature, but more in the spirit of one examining folklore. That is to say, she regards them as artefacts of a collective tradition, created according to regulated and generally accepted patterns, like the icons of a medieval monastery. The literary bureaucracy of this tradition were established at meetings of Writers' Union congresses and in the articles of officially approved critics. Aspiring writers who wanted to get their works published knew they had to study, learn from and imitate these exemplars. The result, at least during Stalin's lifetime, was a fictional structure so stereotyped that Clark is able to reduce it to a single master plot, based on Gladkov's *Centaur*. All the major Stalinist novels (with the possible exception of Sholokhov's *The Quiet Don*) can be understood in their relationship to this matrix, and in their minor deviations from it.

Where did the common spirit underlying the stereotype come from? Most people would answer hesitatingly: from party ideology. Clark shows that it is not as simple as that. Certainly, some of the stereotype's features were suggested in general terms by Marxism-Leninism: the framework for constructing a more humane and progressive society, and the conflict between "poetry" and "consciousness" which Clark shows to be crucial to the heroes' spiritual development. But Marxism-Leninism had little to say about moral principles, about subjective commitment, faith, love and hope, and all the other personal issues which are the stuff of literature. In the Soviet Union as elsewhere, to deal convincingly with these issues, Soviet literature has had to look to other traditions, to folklore, to religious practices and concepts, and to the aspirations of a native revolutionary heritage which was popular as much as it was Marxist.

The school which actually came closest to establishing a purely Marxist-Leninist literary tradition was RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (there was scarcely a proletarian among them), which established its hegemony in the late 1920s, with party support. RAPP favoured a naturalistic, documentary type of fiction, close to reportage, focusing on the "everyday reality of socialist construction", and on the ordinary citizen, the little man making his modest but vital contribution to the great cause. RAPP members liked to think of their methods as "scientific", in the sense of revealing the reality behind appearances, "tearing off masks" in the caustic, rational and unrelenting manner of Tolstoy.

The result was, however, rather bloodless, not really the stuff to im-

spire the builders of socialism. Besides, its doctrines might lead writers to become too critical of Soviet society. So it was not on this whole RAPP which provided the exemplars of Socialist Realism. On the contrary, RAPP was closed down in 1932, along with all other literary groups, to be replaced by a single all-encompassing Union of Soviet Writers, with its own aesthetic doctrine of Socialist Realism. This claimed still to be concerned with "everyday reality", only now it mixed in a substantial dose of "revolutionary romanticism". Zhdanov, the keynote speaker at the first Writers' Union congress, called on writers to "combine the most masterly of fact, everyday reality with the

Society as a whole was depicted in archaic rather than modern terms. In sociological language, Stalin's Russia was seen not as a *Gesellschaft*, bound by egalitarian, impersonal and instrumental ties, but rather as a *Gemeinschaft*, held together by hierarchical, personal, even consecrated bonds. It was a kind of "great family" in which the wise and benevolent father was, of course, Stalin. The sons learnt from him, from his example as well as from the higher wisdom he mediated. The theory of the "quantitative leap forward" (derived from Engels) was used to justify the notion that ordinary human beings, having access through Stalin to the higher mysteries, could outbid the laws of nature

ism. One was back to the underlying heroic myth, stocked with real enemies and real struggle. This was the path taken by Vladimir Dudintsev, whose *Not by Bread Alone* (1956) shows an inventor from the people battling against conservative academics and industrial managers in the great cause of technological progress. The trouble was, this meant admitting that real enemies had survived in Soviet society, or had perhaps even been generated by it.

The other path forward was to ditch the myth altogether, to seek inspiration in Western models and in the experimental Russian literature of the 1910s and 20s, which had been buried under the Socialist Realism monolith. In this stream Clark mentions particularly the so-called "youth" writers, Vasily Aksyonov and Andrei Bitov.

The divergent tendencies of the 1950s and early 60s, together with somewhat relaxed party control, helped to generate what is today a much more diverse literary scene. Some novels, like the blockbusters of Alexander Chukovsky, still approximate to the Stalinist myth, though with far greater attention to specific historical detail and individual rôle. Some are quite close to what we in the West are accustomed to regard as fiction, with much of the complexity and ambiguity that implies. One common mood seems to be a realization that Soviet man has lost his way and therefore needs to delve back into his past, the individual or collective past, to discover what went wrong and to resume the search for new directions. Especially interesting in this context are Clark's remarks on the vogue for rural fiction: she sees in it a partial revival of the aspiration of the 1930s for an organic, traditional *Gemeinschaft* in a natural setting. Now, however, freed of their incongruous association with the drive towards a new and technologically sophisticated society, these aspirations can be expressed in their pure form. Perhaps what is at work here is the desire to replace pseudo-myth with real myth, and "neo-religion" with traditional religious forms. At any rate, writers such as Vasily Belov, Valentin Rasputin and Chingiz Aitmatov have recently been warning that technological progress (hitherto an obligatory element in official ideology) may actually be destructive unless it is accompanied by equivalent attention to men's spiritual needs. They imply, quite unambiguously to the normally sensitive reader, that these needs are better fulfilled in folk culture and traditional religion than in the superficial political ideologies of progress.

Clark's book suggests, then, that the practitioners of Stalinist Socialist Realism did not simply write what politicians dictated to them. There was a genuine literary content to the work, albeit of a derivative and artificial kind. A tradition on which they built were deeply rooted in Russian culture in ways which Clark meticulously analyses. They proceeded from the *zhilits* (lives of the saints), the *byliny* (folk epic), the criticism of Belinsky and Dobrolyubov, and the fiction of Chernyshevsky, the Populists and Gorky. Following Yuri Lotman, Clark regards societies as, in part, information-processing systems, in which literature sends signals as well as receiving them. "The particular literary possibilities canonized in Socialist Realism were those that had power to interact with the new ideologies which had become dominant." Writers not only received instructions, then; they may in fact have helped to create the hyperbolic, mythical language in which much of the official discourse of the 1930s was couched. Perhaps they even helped to conjure up the ritualized atmosphere of the show trials, with their highly stylized villas. The "platform of poverty" which Fadeyev complained was partly his own creation.

In its sure grasp of a huge subject, and in its speculative boldness, Professor Clark's study represents a major breakthrough. It sends one back to the original texts with a whole host of new questions, but it also helps us to understand the place of the "official" writer in that peculiar mixture of ideology, collective pressure and inspiration which is the Soviet literary process.



Lev Kopelev at Anna Akhmatova's grave in Komarov, 1979; reproduced from Svirski's book reviewed here.

most heroic prospects"; and the emphasis was moving from the former to the latter, as Clark shows. Increasingly, in fiction, reality was presented no longer with painstaking exactitude, but in the light of its revolutionary development, which usually meant embellishing it in the spirit of current party propaganda, not tearing masks off, in fact, but keeping them on, and even touching them up.

The central figures of this new fiction were no longer little men, part of a mass, but exceptional people, "positive heroes", reminiscent of epic traditions. Coming from the common people, these "positive heroes" submitted their passionate and rebellious natures (their "spontaneity") to the wise teaching of the party and of Stalin personally ("consciousness"). The combination of nature and nurture produced mature and steadfast leaders of men, capable of guiding their followers to victory in the great battles military and industrial of socialist construction. They were often referred to as *bogatyri*, the knights of Russian medieval folk legend, clear-sighted and resourceful, indomitable in combat (whether against bureaucrats, shirkers, wreckers or real enemies) and capable of improbable feats of physical strength. "There are no strongholds which Bolsheviks cannot take by storm," said Stalin in 1931. This became the keynote of party-approved fiction, a spirit not of science and economic rationality, but of hyperbole and myth.

One might imagine that at least the action in Stalinist fiction would centre on industrial and technological themes, in keeping with the nature of socialist construction, as preached by the politicians. In fact, however, even here pre-modern myth kept breaking in: nature and the elements — fire, storm, flood and ice — formed the heroes far more than did the discipline of the construction site or the shop-floor. Nikolai Ostrovsky's steel was "tempered" by armed combat, hardship and illness, not by the blast-furnace; and although Oleg Koshovoi, the hero of Fadeyev's *Young Guard*, came from a mining town, he made his first emblematic appearance in the novel tearing wild horses, and was subsequently never seen down the pit.

and achieve feats previously considered impossible. They went through terrible setbacks and tribulations, but emerged triumphant on a higher plane of being. This is what Professor Clark calls the "neo-Platonism" of high Stalinist culture, a "neo-religious doctrine of salvation and rebirth".

The problem was that the novel was never a very satisfactory vehicle for this kind of mythical vision. The framework of realist fiction does, after all, arouse in the reader certain expectations: that the author will give a faithful and detailed (if not necessarily unbiased) account of the social setting, that he will attempt to be probing and honest in his analysis of character and motive. And of course literary critics continued to proclaim that this is precisely what novelists were doing, even when in fact they were recounting fantastic tales, full of conceits more suited to the epic or the ode. The result was what Clark calls a "modal schizothymia" at the heart of the Soviet novel, which helps to explain the almost universal critical disdain with which it has (wholly understandably) been hitherto treated in the West.

After Stalin's death, Clark argues, there seemed to be two possible ways out of petrified Socialist Real-

## In pursuit of the past

By Julian Symons

ROSS MACDONALD:  
Self-Portrait: Ceaselessly Into The Past  
131pp. Santa Barbara: Capra Press.  
\$15.  
0 88496 170 2

When Kenneth Millar was born in California in 1915, his father John wrote a Scots dialect poem to celebrate the occasion, a poem that began:

December's gleur was thick the morn  
That Jeck and Nanny's bairn was born.  
His name was Kenneth.

Four years later Jeck, a harbour pilot stationed in Vancouver (the retreat from Canada to California was brief), a local newspaper editor, a man ready to pass half the morning explaining Indian signs to a casual visitor, took Kenneth to her home territory in Ontario and there he was brought up, as what he calls "a persistent visitor" in the homes of friends and relatives. The threat of an orphanage was averted when Jeck's cousin took the six-year-old boy into his home, but he was always on the move. After graduation from high school Kenneth counted the rooms he had lived in during his first sixteen years, and reached a total of fifty. He had begun to write verse

and fiction before reaching his teens, and in due time published thrillers and crime stories, first in his own name, and eventually under that of Ross Macdonald.

*Self-Portrait* is a collection of pieces written over nearly twenty years. Some are related to Macdonald's interest in ecology, and concern such matters as the Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969 and a projected new road that would have affected local condors, but most are introductions to collections of crime stories. The pieces have been chosen with skill and edited with tact by the author's friend Ralph Sipper, and as Eudora Welty says in a foreword, they contain a strong autobiographical element. They are, indeed, the nearest thing to an autobiography we are likely to get. The illness that affects Macdonald has, at least for the visible future, brought his writing life to an end. This short book is extremely informative about the pressures that have produced his novels.

Most of them since *The Galton Case* (1959) have concerned a broken family and a lost father, and to this aspect of his early life the articles return again and again. One might expect that Kenneth would feel bitterly about the father whose departure left the family in penury, but that is not the case. Jeck is mentioned with pride as a fine swimmer and wrestler, a man of medium size who could lift a half-ton weight, a poet and draftsman. "The happiest day of my childhood if not my life" was

the one when the boy's father took him out in a harbour boat "and I stood beside him in the offshore light, with his hands and my hand on the wheel". Young Kenneth Millar felt much more tenderness for the father who left him than for the mother who stayed, and the significance of *The Galton Case* for the author was that it represented the emergence in his fiction of "the epic theme of a lost father". Work on the book was stimulated by the chance that Millar's friend Donald Davie, who lived nearby, was using a similar theme for a poem. If one reads the later books, roughly half Macdonald's output, with this theme in mind, the repetitions of it become obvious. For several years, as he has said himself, he has been playing variations on the same basic tale. Most writers, he says, work out of their obsessions, and certainly that is true in his own case. To produce a work of fiction is "to struggle with demons, to get them under control... I mean problems, memories, or whatever else makes up one's psychic life".

With the appearance of *The Goodbye Look* in 1969, Macdonald was hailed in his own country as a major novelist, a writer whose "worth and quality surpass the limitations of the form". To quote one review typical of many. Yet he has always respected the crime story's form, as Eudora Welty says. A mystery must be created, and interest maintained in readers who mostly ask for no more than an understanding tale of crime and retribution. These are problems

for any writer trying to extend the boundaries of the crime story — Chandler, Highsmith, Nicolas Freeling, even Sayers in *Quincy* — and each finds a different answer. In Macdonald's case "I sacrifice, if sacrifice is the word, everything to those two requirements" of holding the reader's attention by surprising turns of plot, and concealing what has actually happened.

In England Macdonald has received little serious critical regard, being viewed as a rather faint carbon-copy of Hammett and Chandler. Yet the differences are greater than the similarities, how much greater may be seen by comparing Philip Marlowe with Lew Archer. Marlowe "is the hero, he is everything", in Chandler's words. Archer, as Macdonald says here more than once, is not the central character, nor the main object of interest, in the books where he appears. He is simply the man to whom people talk, the sayer, discovering the cracks in the family's apparently irreproachable sound building. This was not always true. If one looks at early and late Archer it is plain that Macdonald has consciously tried to reduce the detective's importance and eliminate him as a personality, so that he shall not stand between the reader and the books' real subject, the rediscovery of the past.

It would be foolish not to admit that there have been losses, as well as gains, in Macdonald's single-minded pursuit of the past during the thirty-odd years that he and his wife the crime novelist Margaret Millar have spent in the haven of Santa Barbara. The early books do show debts to Hammett and Chandler, but they have a verve and an audacity to the use of simile and metaphor that is restricted, almost placed in cold storage, in the later ones. *The Way Some People Die* and *The Ivory Grin*

are particularly exciting and enjoyable. But as Macdonald has said himself, the blaze of youth does not last. "Tune writers... on the backs of torn-off calendar sheets", and the later stories are immensely more subtle and serious. At times the symbolism is too insistent, like the forest fire in *The Underground Man*, "much like the Coyote Canyon fire that threatened Santa Barbara", Mr Sipper tells us, that is reflected in the purgative fire burning out the secrets of the Broadhurst family. Yet the opening of *The Blue Hammer*, which casually mentions "the towers of the mission and the courthouse half submerged in smoke", most delicately suggests the mists and confusions through which Archer will look for the truth about Richard Chanry's missing painting.

This last, or most recent, novel is in some ways the peak of Macdonald's achievement, bringing to the unravelling of past gulls much of the sparkle in the early work. A choice of books that suggest his range as crime writer and novelist might include the early ones already mentioned, together with *The Zebra-Striped Hearse* and *Black Monks*, two of his own favourites, plus *The Fur Side of the Dollar* and *The Blue Hammer*. When one sees the increasing skill, subtlety and sense of purpose shown in the course of Macdonald's writing, it is obvious that he has had in England much less than his due of praise. He stated his intentions with clarity in an interview given several years ago: "I've been trying to put into my books the same sorts of things that a reader finds in a general novel, a whole version of life in our society and in our time. Of course, my books are somewhat limited by the kind of structure and subject matter that is inherent in the contemporary detective novel. I seem to work best within such limitations."

## A sentimental education

By Vivian Mercier

MONK GIBBON:  
The Pupil  
A Memory of Love  
121pp. Dublin: Wolfhound Press. 68  
Meintje Square, Dublin 1. 26.  
0 905473 68 X

Let me say at once that this is a remarkable book. In his preface, Monk Gibbon writes: "It belongs to the 'thirties". Viewed in the perspective of the 'eighties', it may seem strange and unreal." If that is so, then the strangeness only adds to its charm; perhaps few memoirs — or novels — published in 1981 will prove more haunting.

Mr Gibbon has never published a novel, but *The Pupil*, like *The Seals* (1935), employs the structure of fiction, along with the texture of memoir, to such an extent that concepts useful in the criticism of fiction — the implied reader and even the unreliable narrator — can be usefully applied to it. All the "faults" that orthodox critics of fiction might object to are present, but in practice they matter little. Digressions on the nature of love and the practice of education are, anyway, acceptable in first-person memoirs, and therefore in memoir-novels such as Proust's. As for the peculiar intimacy, almost coyness, with which Gibbon addresses his implied reader, it turns out to be a fairly happy accident. An appended Note tells us:

*The Pupil*... is based upon lengthy entries in my journal, made at the time or shortly afterwards. The years passed and when I began to write the narrative, I put it all into a fiction. I was an entirely truthful confession... into the mouth of a fictional character who related the events to a friend.

Gibbon later wisely eliminated this artificial distancing, but vestiges of it remain. Of the piece of writing which first convinced him that the Pupil (Anne de Selincourt) really possessed the touch of genius he so badly wanted her to show, he writes: "I will have it. I see you are smiling to think that I have kept it all these years." This makes sense in the original context, where the narrator is speaking to a friend who is present, addressed to a reader, it seems, the artificiality of distancing.

At times the implied reader is treated as if he or she were more cynical, as well as more worldly-wise and less emotionally susceptible, than Gibbon himself; why else would he protest so often that what he felt for Anne (aged fourteen when he was first attracted to her) was "love" not "sexual tenderness"?

Love is, as I have probably said already, the discovery of an unsuspected and exceptional value in a particular individual. And it may, of course, find its natural expression in sexual tenderness. But not necessarily so... it is this distinction between two linked elements to which our epoch tends to remain so obstinately blind... But an obsession with the persona of another individual is an altogether different thing [from a physical urge]. That my feelings about Anne were wholly innocuous only made the preoccupation all the more baffling and perhaps all the more compelling.

On the whole it is more pleasant for a reader faced with this subject to be told "You are not as I" than to be greeted by Humbert Humbert as the *Hypocrite* of *Le Capitaine Corcoran*. *The Pupil* inhabits different universes. As losing Lolita, Humbert crushes the reader with his remorse; as long as Lolita was in his power, he felt no compunction about robbing the child of her childhood. Gibbon's withers are unwrung, since he has no cause to feel remorseful. Indeed something less than his total self-approval might have been refreshing.

Admiring his book as I do, it still seems to me that Gibbon is, or was, something of a prig. For example, he once gave Anne an inscribed copy of a volume of his own verse: "I heard her exclaim 'Oh, I must kiss you!' She made a quick movement towards me and her hands were already on my shoulders before I could say, 'Oh, no! I wouldn't do at all! I should lose my job at once if my pupils took to kissing me.'"

Neering forty and happily married, Gibbon wanted: no scandal, of course, but this was cruel treatment for an adolescent whose sensitivity to other things besides poetry he had gone out of his way to encourage. Though Gibbon never, I think, refers to Plato, he implies that the *Symposium* takes too optimistic a view of the role of love in second and third-level education:

I was not certain by any means that I was doing her a service in taking a special interest in her... Had I really done her a disservice by helping her to cultivate her sensibility? Was sensitivity her enemy rather than her friend and should I have been at some pains to immunise her against it?

As a life-long teacher of adolescents or children, Gibbon refuses to contemplate the possibility that pupils might fall in love with him. (Universally teaching, especially at the post-graduate level, forces one to accept that possibility, though most of the time one doesn't see what is going on until it's over. The result is usually ironic.)

Nevertheless, Gibbon rather closely resembles our Jamesian (and Fordian) friend, the unreliable narrator. His memoir keeps us in a state of pleasurable tension, just as a good novel does, until the aesthetic resolution in the penultimate page: Anne, now in her thirties and married nearly fifteen years, kisses her old teacher for the first time, on the mouth. Friends drive him home "... in a state of bemused happiness... I kept thinking, so she did like you a little. She must have done so to have kissed you on the lips as she did." This is not the language of a poet but the guarded banality of an Irish Protestant, an ex-officer and a gentleman. Could he not say, "she loved me" in plain prose, or better still write a poem? Like Dante in the *Vita Nuova*, Monk Gibbon has already given us several of his own poems, including at least one inspired by Anne, "Love's Cure", which begins "I was loved...". It would be absurd for him to claim, in his eighty-sixth year, that he is no longer capable of writing a poem.

Perhaps Anne's intense significance for Gibbon after so long lies in her having inspired the first poem he had written for more than a year. Happy marriage is a great silencer of poets. His prose, if not his poetry, has sometimes — in *The Seals* and now again in *The Pupil* — come very close to perfection. Anne's radiant image has enabled Monk Gibbon to evoke around her a school community, rides over the downs, and the Dorsetshire landscape and seascape in ways that make this a rich, many-sided book rather than the narrow record of an obsession.

### April Books

#### Non-Fiction

#### THE ART OF MEMORY Friends in Perspective Lord Butler KG, CH

The final book from this eminent politician which looks at the careers of nine of his friends: Ernest Bevin, Aneurin Bevan, Lord Halifax, 'Chips' Channon, Jawaharlal Nehru, Charles Sorley, Walter Monckton, Ian Macleod and Archbishop William Temple. £7.95

#### Fiction

#### THE CHILDREN'S STORY James Clavell

From the author of *Shogun* and *Noble Horses* — a frightening fable of the future and a warning that children's minds are only too vulnerable to political manipulation. £4.95

#### THE COUNTRY OF HER DREAMS Janice Elliott

'Eloquently written and admirably controlled, particularly in its sense of place... a considerable novel'. *Hermione Lee in the Observer*. £6.95

#### A FALCON FOR THE HAWKS Clive Egleton

Set in March 1917, a superbly-written story about an encounter between a Zappelin and a diminutive BE fighter long overdue for the scrap heap. £6.95

#### SEEK OUT AND DESTROY Alan Evans

Set in November 1917, another tautly-written novel in which a young English naval commander is ordered to destroy a German battleship, *Salsburg*, before it terrorises the Adriatic. £6.95

#### REMEMBRANCE Danielle Steel

From the bestselling author of *The Ring* — a love story that carries two generations of women through love, loss and sacrifice. £6.95

Hodder & Stoughton







## Cultures and characters

By Alan Bell

STANLEY MORISON:

Selected Essays on the History of Letter-Forms in Manuscript and Print Edited by David McKitterick

2 volumes. 417pp. 126 plates. Cambridge University Press. £120. 0 521 22338 5

Stanley Morison's posthumous standing has been confirmed by Nicolas Barker's distinguished biography, several monographs on his work, an important retrospective exhibition and the definitive revision of the bibliography of his writings. His standing in typographical history, both as a scholar and as a practitioner, has been fully confirmed by subsequent commentators, but some of the foundations on which his reputation is based have remained notoriously elusive. Several of his most important typographical and calligraphical studies are buried in obscure Festschriften or periodicals now of great price, and are far from accessible. Other essays were deliberately conceived of as working papers gradually refining ideas that exercised his mind throughout an intellectually strenuous life; though the preposition "Towards" only occurs in the titles of a few of his essays gathered here, they nearly all show a striving in the direction of definition or perfection that was characteristic of so much of his work. The notions that were working their way out in his Lyell Lectures, entitled "Aspects of Authority and Freedom in relation to Graeco-Latin script, inscription and type, sixth century BC to twentieth century AD", had long been exercising him. In the decade between the delivery of the lectures and his death in 1967 he continued to work at the topic, his posthumously published *Politics and Script* having a tentative air to it in spite of all its stimulating dogmatism. Similar questions of why particular letter-forms were adopted by particular authorities, intellectual, religious or political, also lay behind the volume *John Fell, the University Press and the "Fell" Types*, published the day after his death, which is one of his greatest memorials.

This vigorous search for explanations of the interplay between grand schemes of cultural history and the intricate details of palaeographical and typographical presentation was bound to throw off innumerable parables as the author's intellectual horizons extended themselves, enriched by the meticulous and professionally essential analysis of minute distinctions of literal form. Even though subsequent scholarship has often modified the conclusions of his pioneering essays, they are full and suggestive as to be worth continued study. Morison himself was well aware of the need to make his occasional publications more accessible, but his main attempt to gather scattered material was a victim of an air raid in 1941: when his working notes and much of his personal library were destroyed. At long last a collection on the lines he intended has been published, in a form as ample and elegant as he himself would have considered appropriate. (Even he might have had difficulty matching the often vast footnotes to the double-column layout that is otherwise sensitively handled by the Cambridge University Press at its best.) The illustrations in this edition are, in many cases, an improvement on those originally published, there are excellent indexes, and the volumes are succinctly introduced by David McKitterick, who has already shown his mastery of the subject in his edition of Morison's correspondence with his American colleague Daniel Berkeley Updike.

Nowhere is the editor's hand better shown than in the additional footnotes discreetly added to the palaeographical essays, indicating the many corrections of detail and in principle arising from the work of scholars like Professor B. L. Ullman and Dr A. C. de la Mare. These essays on early and Renaissance hands retain their interest, and not just for their place in the history of

graphy of a subject which, as Morison himself was well aware, was partly uncharted and terminologically unsettled at the time he wrote. Some of his exploratory remarks on post-Renaissance calligraphy remain the best (and often the only) comments on that still underexplored subject: the study of English, and Scottish, writing-masters and their books has not yet advanced much beyond Sir Ambrose Heal's catalogue with Morison's introduction (reprinted here), published half a century ago. Morison brought to the study of handwriting an eye trained differently from the usual palaeographical scholar's: he took a typographer's view of the forms of individual letters and their relation to each other, and his attitude to the duct (or flow) of a particular script, and of scribal *mise-en-page*, may have been influenced by his work on early printed books.

The major essays on the design of types, published in the 1920s, have a quite remarkable range. "Towards an Ideal Italic", from the *Fleurbaey* of 1926, is in many ways the most interesting of the set. It is more forcefully argued than its companions on Roman and script types, and full of stimulating general comments alongside the detailed commentary on ligatures and awashes, and so on. Its force is not very seriously diminished

by the knowledge that his arguments in favour of a sloped Roman type as against Italic forms properly devised have been largely disproved by later preference and practice. In this Italic essay, as elsewhere, there are the characteristic dicta of the wise practitioner.

In typography, as in most arts and crafts, success attends the disciplined and restrained use of appropriate material. The most appropriate material is that informed to the greatest extent by right reason and intelligence; only when the traditional typographical usages are in conformity, are we justified in being satisfied with them.

Historical research and professional practice were interdependent; knowledge of the past was for Morison the soundest grounding for current experiment. His mind was constantly in search of Origins, whether of shapes or of ideas. The past was used most effectively as a springboard for the revision of current practice in his celebrated "Memorandum on a proposal to revise the typography of 'The Times'" of 1930, where he treated the Editor and Proprietor to a prolonged discourse on the history of the Roman letter and of the structure of printing type. The presentation lost nothing of its pungency while the whole of printing

and the mind of man were deployed in a leisurely but commercially skilful attempt to convince his clients of the need to adopt a new typography that would be "masculine, English, direct, simple, not more novel than it becometh to be novel, or more novel than logic is novel in newspaper typography, and absolutely free from faddishness and frivolity". The case was put patiently, and convincingly, and by the time Morison turned the attention of the *eminensissimi* of Printing House Square to the black-letter masthead of *The Times* itself — he felt he had earned the right to use a little cheek. Of the Gothic style used in the paper from early days (but not at the very start), he could remark that "Fashionable gentlemen of the last quarter of the [eighteenth] century, anxious to strengthen their social positions, redecorated their country houses with this busy fusion and confusion of gothic sadness with rococo gaiety. . . . The most significant memorial of this lapse in English taste is the present gothic titling of *The Times*". The light-hearted manner of Morison's supplementary memorandum urging a consistent typographic approach for all parts of the paper helped to give its proprietors courage to tackle the most emotionally sensitive part of their task of reform.

The *Times* memoranda, well known from all accounts of Morison's work, were internally circulated documents, now very difficult for the outsider to locate. They occupy the most prominent part of the second volume of McKitterick's selection, which also includes a long paper, "The Origins of the Newspaper", revised periodically between 1932 and 1954, and a substantial essay, "The Learned Press as an Institution", from a Festschrift published in Amsterdam in 1963. In the latter, Morison's thoughts can be seen turning to Aspects of Authority, foreshadowing some of the later parts of *Politics and Script*. Authority keeps breaking in throughout both volumes, whether in the discussion of the script adopted by Abbot Maudrannus of Corbie in the late eighth century, or of the political and religious considerations that may have affected the use of Arabesque ornament in early sixteenth-century Florence. Issues much wider than the conventional limits of historical typographical analysis are constantly touched on, and they show strongly individual qualities of mind being added to the quite outstanding qualities of eye that were the principal attributes that Morison brought to his typographical work, and they never fail to animate even the most recalcitrant of his technical disquisitions.

## Designed to delight

By Ruari McLean

JOHN DREYFUS:

A History of the Nonesuch Press With a Descriptive Catalogue by David McKitterick, Simon Rendall and John Dreyfus

340pp. Nonesuch Press. £115. 0 370 30397 0

Many people still think of the Nonesuch as being a private press; John Dreyfus, in this admirable history, shows clearly that it was a genuine, if highly unusual and innovative, publishing house, producing unlimited as well as limited editions.

Francis Meynell founded the Press in 1923, with, as partners, his second wife Vera Mendel, whom he had just married, and David Garnett, who had been best man at the wedding. Vera Mendel provided the firm's working capital of £300, as well as the formidable literary talents: she chose and edited the first Nonesuch book, John Donne's *Love Poems*, published in an edition of 1,250 copies (1,200 at 10s 6d). The eighth Nonesuch title (of no fewer than twelve published between May and December 1923), Ernest Toller's play *Masques and Muzz*, was also her choice and translated by her from the German — the first translation ever made of Toller's work into English. Vera Mendel knew even more poetry than Francis, and, as he himself has recorded, developed in him a sense of responsibility about texts — which became such a feature of the Nonesuch Press. David Garnett, the third partner, was yet more widely read than Francis or Vera, and was at that time a partner in Francis Elwell's antiquarian bookshop at 30 George Street in Soho. Garnett, says Dreyfus, remembered his bookshop partners as great talkers, who attracted more talkers and listeners, so that the shop was "often as full as a pub at closing time". The basement was empty, and Meynell took it as the first office of the new firm. Garnett's contributions were not only literary: he introduced Stephen Gooden, the engraver of the first Nonesuch device.

It is worth noting that Stanley Morison was not invited to join the venture, although he and Meynell were working together for some years and were close friends. Dreyfus writes: "Somewhat sadly, Francis felt unable to approach him in 1923. Their friendship had suffered from Francis leaving his church and moreover each was uncomfortable knowing about the other's matrimonial problems." (It was Francis

Meynell's mother who had written the classic sonnet of renunciation "I must not think of thee"; but it was Morison who, in love with someone not his wife, chose the bitter path of renunciation. Francis did not.)

The proof of Nonesuch's competence as general publishers was *The Week-End Book*, published at 6s in 1924, and reprinted six times in the same year. The first edition had a jacket by McKitterick Kutter; later editions were illustrated by Albert Rutherford (in colour), T. L. Poulton and Edward Bawden. There were eight editions and many reprints: it was a remarkable achievement by any standards. Another more notable success in unlimited edition publishing was the "Compensious" series. The suggestion for this came from Geoffrey Keynes, who had become a close friend of Meynell and his colleagues from the earliest days of the Press, and who made many important editorial contributions to it. Keynes edited the first "Compensious" title, *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, 1927, published in one volume of 1,152 pages and sold at the, to us staggeringly low price of 12s 6d in buckram. The series eventually included Byron, Carroll, Coleridge, De Quincey, Donne, Hazlitt, Johnson, William Morris, Pausanias, Shakespeare, Shelley, Swift and Whitman. What book-reading family in the English-speaking world today does not possess, or wish it possessed, at least one of these titles?

As a book designer, Meynell was constantly experimenting, and deliberately set out never to repeat himself, or adopt a standardized style. His approach to typography was light-hearted; but however ebullient his title-pages or chapter openings, the text was always designed for reading. Volume 1 of *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, 1927, published in one volume of 1,152 pages and sold at the, to us staggeringly low price of 12s 6d in buckram. The series eventually included Byron, Carroll, Coleridge, De Quincey, Donne, Hazlitt, Johnson, William Morris, Pausanias, Shakespeare, Shelley, Swift and Whitman. What book-reading family in the English-speaking world today does not possess, or wish it possessed, at least one of these titles?

All the poems are printed in Italic; not merely because these Fell letters are particularly pretty and characteristic, but because it has been thought right to entice, by its unusual form, a particular attention to the poetry, so that the sight should not lazily run along the lines with a lazy mind.

whom Meynell as designer had much in common) he did not draw his own devices or design a type face, but he drew calligraphic spine lettering on at least two of his titles, one of which is shown on the jacket: this is the extraordinary men's many talents. John Dreyfus, himself a distinguished designer, provides a fascinating insight into Meynell's methods of working. It is clear that Meynell "exploited" his printers, papermakers and binders (and indeed he is quoted as telling Max Reinhardt "how pleased he was that the pre-war reputation of the Nonesuch Press remained untarnished — a reputation that any papermaker who worked for Nonesuch lost money") and it is also clear that most of those he exploited came back for more. They were (wisely) proud to be associated with Meynell's achievements. Dreyfus shows again and again that Meynell never consciously accepted second-best solutions to anything. He took endless trouble — and gave endless trouble to others — to get the result he had in mind, which is why, long after profits and losses are forgotten, Nonesuch books remain valuable.

In the section devoted to Nonesuch publicity (itself remarkable and only slightly less expensive to collect than the books) Dreyfus writes: "No other publisher had publicity devised by a man who combined as did Francis the abilities of poet, publicist, typographer and publisher. He was unique in this particular combination of talents and experience."

The complicated (but interesting) story of what happened to Nonesuch when it ceased, during the Depression, to be able to provide Meynell with a living, and how it eventually came back to him as a gift from the American publisher George Macy, is well told. When Macy "rescued" him from financial disaster, he wanted Meynell to stay on the new Nonesuch since Macy's strategy was to refuse since the strategy as well as the money was to be all Macy's. He did however agree to remain as designer of all the books. It was under Macy's regime that the great Nonesuch Dickens appeared; it was designed largely by the late Harry Carter, under Meynell's supervision. A few books appeared with the Nonesuch imprint that Meynell had nothing to do with, and there were a few more for which he designed only the binding and modified the title-page: all this is detailed in the catalogue.

The Nonesuch Press was never again a full-time job for Meynell. When it was re-formed after the war, Max Reinhardt became Meynell's partner, and his publishing firm, the Bodley Head, undertook responsibility for the financing and production of the books, which Meynell devised and designed. The Nonesuch Press, before the war, had published several children's books, including the now almost mythical *Tale of Mr Tooleloo* and *Tooleloo Two* by Bernard and Elinor Darwin. Now, a series of children's books called the Nonesuch Cygnets was produced, planned by Meynell as beginning perhaps in the nursery and still surviving to its owner's old age; in short, the beginnings of a library and even of collector's habits. While he was designing the Cygnets he was also working on the second Nonesuch Bible; Dreyfus notes, "Francis felt that the gaiety of planning the Cygnets had helped him with the Bible; and equally that the detailing and discipline of the Bible pages had helped him with the Cygnets." The second Nonesuch Bible was published in three volumes in 1963, 10,000 sets were issued at £12 12s and £45; no better edition is available in which to enjoy reading the Authorized Version.

Dreyfus sums up with excellent, well-illustrated appreciations of the Nonesuch Press's design, production and publishing achievements; this is followed by a catalogue (by David McKitterick, Simon Rendall and Dreyfus) which contains more useful information than any other press bibliography I have ever read, down to references to reviews of the books at the time of publication. If it could have included a reproduction of every title-page, instead of some (as has occasionally been done, for example in some Harvard University Press catalogues), it would have been perfect.

The design of the book, by Dreyfus, and the printing by Curran, are good, but the jacket is superb. The spines of twenty-four Nonesuch books have been photographed through a special camera, procured by Cambridge University Press, and a new process of man lamination gives the colour photograph a sensuous, velvety quality that, word, we can be sure, has delighted Francis Meynell.

The March 1982 issue of *The Library* (Oxford University Press for the Bibliographical Society, ISSN 0024-2160) contains a long article by T. H. Howard-Hill on the MS copy for *King Lear*. Other contributions range from a missing fragment of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* to a series of addenda to the standard W. H. Auden bibliography.

G. N.



The York zoologist Martin Lister's drawing of a Roman altar "in all its sides, and . . . the plan of the top also" as published on March 10, 1683, in the Royal Society's proceedings, and incorporated in Chapter Three, "Of Sepulchres", in *Port Three of Monuments Britannica* by John Aubrey. Volume Two of the work has just been published for the first time (following Volume One in 1980), edited by John Fowles with annotations by Rodney Legg (544pp. Dorset Publishing Company, Milborne Port, Sherborne, Dorset £95. 0 902129 50 3).

## Visits to the marketplace

By Pat Rogers

ROBIN MYERS and MICHAEL HARRIS (Editors):

Development of the English Book Trade, 1700-1899  
172pp. Oxford Polytechnic Press, Headington, Oxford, OX3 0BP. £5.50. 0 902692 26 7

Generally the old-style bibliophile and the practitioner of *l'histoire du livre* behave like Castor and Pollux: when one is in evidence, the other retreats from view. The present collection affords something of an exception. It comprises five papers delivered at a conference organized by the University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies in November 1980. *L'apparition du livre*, if one may misapprehend the phrase, arises from an initiative of the publishing house at Oxford Polytechnic, and the volume is a creditable production. A slightly amateurish look to the layout is more than made good by an accurate text and a stouter binding in limp cloth than many commercial books now possess (stitching rather than glue). The only misprint worth attention is a reference to A. N. L. Munby as "Mumby".

It is the contents of the volume which may give rise to legitimate criticism. They were unbalanced by the sad death of Ian Parsons just before the conference took place; his intended survey of book-trade legislation from the Copyright Act to the Net Book Agreement would have supplied a firm spine to the intellectual and historical coverage, one that is not really present as the book stands. Three factors have helped to weight the scales so that the later part of the designated period, so far as detailed treatment is concerned, is found wanting.

First, the intended contribution by Parsons is replaced by one on government tolerance towards the press, by Alan Dowds. This is a highly interesting study, but its cut-off date is as early as 1790 (fixed, if I under-

stand correctly, by the composition of a passage in Boswell on the topic). Second, the paper by John Sutherland which does reach into the 1890s is by far the shortest item. It takes a good deal of secondary work for granted, and moves rapidly to summation and critical assessment. Third, the contribution by Peter Thorogood which ends the volume serves further to unbalance things. The title is "Thomas Hood: A Nineteenth-Century Author and his Relations with the Book Trade to 1835". In fact, the first section concerns Thomas Hood, senior, the poet's father; while the second part is a mini-biography of the earlier career of the writer himself, stopping short at his enforced exile. Stronger editing might have nudged this contribution more sustainably in the direction of issues raised elsewhere among the papers.

The book has a number of competing centres of interest. The two most significant contributions relate to the eighteenth century and take a broad social or political perspective on events to the book trade. Dowds usefully points out trade-sloas which have grown up over the Stamp Act of 1712, and shows how a quite different measure (lost in its passage through parliament) represented a truly repressive attempt to curb the trade by obliging every author to list their name and address in each book. His account of politicians' attitudes towards the press suggests an affinity with the views of some contemporary publishers towards illicit photocopying — not that the latter's aggrieved party should get a share in the author's most valuable single item, considers "Periodicals and the Book Trade". He reveals the extent of booksellers' participation in the running of newspapers and magazines, and draws on genuinely new information to establish his case that "the extension of periodical ownership of the book trade, giving a degree of formality and practical effectiveness to the booksellers which they had not previously obtained".

This paper indicates that some qualification might be made to this statement by Sutherland — that is: "In the eighteenth century the collaborative tendency took the form of *ad hoc* combinations of publishers, typically mustered for single productions. There was no general or effective centralisation within the trade until 1829, when the Committee of London-Booksellers and Publishers came into being." As one would expect, Sutherland writes authoritatively and sharply on such matters as the Net Book Agreement and the Society of Authors; but the treatment is too rapid to allow for any very surprising disclosure.

There remain two contributions to a quite different vein. The way in which Robin Myers begins her account of John Nichols' officiously reveals its mode of operation: "Mr Nichols", the Oxford printer Daniel Prince, told the antiquary Richard Oughton — and Nichols recorded it in the *Literary Anecdotes* — "is one of those laborious and truly useful Gentlemen who do not spare pains to preserve and inform Posterity in Literary History. . . . Like her predecessor E. L. Hart, Miss Myers has taken over some of the more idiosyncratic characteristics of her subject: the result is a choppy, spasmodic argument, with quotations within quotations and some higgledy-piggledy bibliographic excursions. There is a higher proportion of unfamiliar material to Thorogood's essay, but the tendency to wander off into the domain of others (John Taylor, especially) and an inveterate diffuseness mean that this proto-thesis on Hood falls to Hamlet as book-trade developments as it might have done. The real interest is a nakedly biographic.

Mr Sutherland ends his piece with the most dramatic thought on offer, that is the prediction of some new and imminent tectonic shift in the British book trade. Nothing so seismic is foreshadowed in bibliographic studies by this volume, but it contains essays of real independent interest. The right expression might be *laudandus in partibus*.

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# Between god and beast

By P. E. Easterling

CHARLES SEGAL:  
Tragedy and Civilization  
An Interpretation of Sophocles  
507pp. Harvard University Press. £21.  
0 674 90206 8

Sophocles seems to generate works of criticism at the same rate as Shakespeare, no doubt for the same good reason that there is so much in him to write about. Two other full-length studies were published in 1980, while *Tragedy and Civilization* was in the press: Winington-Ingram's *Sophocles: an Interpretation* and Burton's *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies*. Another, Albert Machin's *Continuité et cohérence dans le théâtre de Sophocle*, is already imminent. Charles Segal's long book makes a highly individual contribution to the debate, diverting attention from many of the favourite issues of traditional criticism and attempting to approach Sophocles from a fresh vantage-point. What he has to say will have an important effect on the way we think about these plays in future and will doubtless make much work that has been influential in the past look crude and oversimplified, though it is one of his great merits that he writes without polemical intent.

Other qualities that impress themselves very strongly on the reader are Segal's enthusiasm, sensitivity and sheer persistence in attention to detail. His background reading is prodigious, and there are plenty of places where a less serious critic would have been tempted merely to show it off, or to indulge in scholarly controversy for its own sake; but Segal, though remarkably conscientious in his study of his acknowledged of it, never lets it distract him from the important business in hand, which is to offer a consistent and detailed interpretation of each of the seven surviving tragedies. This means paying very close attention to language, and he has made a systematic attempt by means of transliteration, translation and paraphrase, to share his often complex readings with the non-specialist. For the reader with no Greek at all the book is bound to be slow going, but if he is willing to persevere (and is already familiar with the action of the plays) he will find it helpful and informative and in no way patronizing. The classical scholar for his part will find stimulus in the way old problems are redefined and examined in new contexts.

The book opens with three chapters which set out Segal's critical position. Sophoclean tragedy, as he sees it, is characteristically concerned with civilization. "The fact of man's struggle to discover and assert his humanness in the face of the impersonal forces of nature and his own potential violence on the one hand and the remote powers of the gods on the other." In exploring the tensions and conflicts that man faces in his attempt to live by civilized values Sophocles - naturally enough for a writer in fifth-century Athens - uses the model of the polis, "a bounded space dividing the human world from the wild", and presents his heroes as individuals with "a special destiny apart from other men" which gives their life moral significance, and also as suffering "a potentially dangerous, indeed fatal, isolation from the community and its secure values".

The hero not only fulfils a pattern of attaining personal knowledge out of ignorance, reality out of illusion, but also enacts paradigmatically the place of man on the axis between god and beast, between divine order and the threat of chaos or meaninglessness. The two axes intersect at the points of man's uniquely human creations: the city, the house, ritual, law, justice, language. It is just these creations, and the structures on which they rest, that the hero calls into question, threatens, and paradoxically affirms.

Segal argues that this general approach to Sophoclean tragedy can usefully be illuminated by the

methods of structuralist criticism, not just because Greek literature operates in terms of polarities, but also, more importantly, because this kind of analysis views a literary work "in the context of interwoven 'deep structures' which pervade the entire cultural life of the community" and because it attempts to "decode the system" of the community in question by revealing the homologies between the different codes of the social order - familial, spatial, linguistic, ritual and so on. This is the principle on which Segal organizes the chapters which deal with the plays one by one: using a synchronic rather than a diachronic method he examines in detail how the different codes are interconnected and how they are used in each play to give significance to the issues at stake. The strength of this mode of analysis is that it never looks for a slick and over-simple formulation of "meaning" but attempts to do justice to each play's profound complexities. Some of the insights Segal offers, particularly on *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus Coloneus*, show how effectively the method can be used.

On the other hand, it has its drawbacks. The characteristic pattern of Segal's chapters is cumulative; this arrangement in the form of a list, in which each of the various codes is studied in turn, offers very little scope for the development of an argument, and it is hard to read the book without being given an impression of sameness and over-rich elaboration, although the writing is consistently fluent and Segal has taken pains to avoid a mechanical manner of presentation. What is missing is a sense of the elegance, shapeliness and dynamic movement of the tragedies, and of their paradoxical lucidity that masks the deepest ambiguities. Admittedly some of Segal's imaginative responses to Sophoclean imagery give a hint of the extraordinary intellectual and aesthetic excitement that the poet arouses, but the book does not capture his rhetorical qualities or the feel of his rhetoric, despite some good passing remarks, and the dust-jacket's claim that the study pays "special attention to form, style and character". There are only a few cursory and rather vague comments on the formal aspects of the lyrics, no attempt is made to study the relation between syntax and sense (or to point, for example, to the paradox that when language collapses into inarticulate cries, like the yells of pain of *Philoctetes*, these are normally contained within the formal pattern of the iambic verse), and the synchronic presentation makes it difficult to trace the ways in which words become progressively weighted as a play develops (there is a good exception to this last point in the chapter on *Electra*). Of course there is a limit to what any one critic can cover in a single book, and Segal is well aware that there are many areas that he has had to neglect; but his own formal choices have seriously limited his freedom to explore those of Sophocles.

Another difficulty arises from his failure to look squarely at the use that Sophocles makes of the epic. The *polis* of fifth-century Greece is indeed the focus of Sophoclean tragedy, but the plays are set in the heroic world, and the characters speak a language which is deeply influenced by Homer, the cyclic

poets and their lyric successors. Whatever else that world of epic poetry may have meant to Sophocles and his contemporaries it certainly meant civilization. The heroic devices were more than a convenient front for giving the action glamour and putting it at a suitable distance from the humdrum present: by recalling the values and standards, the "deep structures", of the fictional society made familiar by the Homeric poems and therefore part of every Greek's inheritance, they made implicit connections between that world and their own contemporary experience. Segal often writes as though the main function of Homeric echoes in Sophocles were to mark the inversion of heroic values in the tragic situation, but they surely also work more positively to convince the audience that human affairs - even their own contemporary problems - are intensely interesting and significant. What most needs emphasizing is the pervasiveness of Homer in Sophocles (Frankel once remarked that one lifetime was not enough to study Sophocles' debt to Homer) - something on the scale of Lucretius' presence in Virgil or Virgil's in Milton. This reliance on earlier literature and its implicit model of civilization greatly complicates the task of "deciphering the codes".

Take "the wild", the beast world, which is one of Segal's recurrent themes as the threat to civilization "from below". He assumes that images taken from the natural world of

animals, growing things and landscape help to articulate the tension between nature and culture or savagery and civilization; but Homeric poetry had already made extensive use of such analogies to give expression to its own world view (Segal himself suggests that this was not exactly comparable with that of the fifth-century poets: "In Homeric epic the limits between human and bestial, though threatened, are relatively stable. Homer's formulaic language confers a certain built-in continuity." Thus Sophocles had access to highly elaborate, "civilized" ways of talking about these elemental things before interpreting any reference to the natural world as reflecting the polarity between civilized speech and the wild. One might, for example, want to invoke the very rich poetic associations of the nightingale lamenting its young (which go back ultimately to the *Odyssey*) before seeing the references to this image at *Electra* 107, 243-244 as examples of the animal imagery surrounding the house and its curse which "brings the bestial into the very heart of the *oikos*").

Whatever its limitations, Segal's method does open one's eyes to many intricate and significant connections in a Sophoclean play, and he is particularly convincing in his balanced treatment of the gods, taking Greek religion and the gods' place in Sophocles seriously without imposing anachronistic moral criteria on the material, capturing "the beauty and terror", as E. R. Dodds put it, of the

traditional beliefs. One of the best passages in the book is perhaps the discussion of *Heracles ex machina* in the second chapter on *Philoctetes* (itself the most interesting of the chapters devoted to individual plays). On some points of religious interpretation Segal seems less sure-footed; it really fails to treat the *Unwritten Laws in Antigone* as the special concern of the gods below? In view of his sensible approach to the treatment of character and the self it is a little odd to find him occasionally flirting with psycho-analysis ("Incestuously begotten, he consumes his life in a kind of narcissistic involution of sibling rivalry", on Polyneices).

The tone is always warm and constructive, admirably free from pedantry and contentiousness. But the writing often lacks crispness, and the book as a whole is certainly too long. Although Segal's reading is very detailed and observant he makes a surprising number of trivial and not-so-trivial slips (there are no "nervous dochmic rhythms" in the first stasimon of *Trachiniae*, here wrongly called the second stasimon; Deianira does not compare her child to "an enclosed virgin's meadow" at *Trach.* 144-9; *fgos* at *Trach.* 171 means oak, not beech tree; Ismene, not Antigone, is the viper Creon sees lurking in his house at *Ant.* 531ff). Nevertheless the book demands to be taken very seriously, as an honest and sensitive reading in which anyone who cares about Sophocles can find much that is valuable and stimulating.

The book is clearly written, with a pleasant candour. Of course, Ellade can afford to be low key: the facts themselves provide the heady stuff. He published his first article when he was fourteen and when he was eighteen, he celebrated his one hundredth publication - most of these were articles on popular entomology in journals for students. At twenty, he was a columnist for one of the leading dailies in Bucharest, writing on virtually any topic he chose (cultural, social, intellectual), as well as contributor to a wide range of other journals. He then received a stipend from the Maharajah of Kassimbazar (on the basis of a perfunctory letter dashed off during an Italian trip) and spent almost three years studying Indian philosophy and mysticism, part of them meditating in a hut in the Himalayas. By the time he was twenty-five, he had taken his doctorate in philosophy, was teaching Buddhism, Yoga, Aristotle and Cusanus, and was becoming a best-selling author of Gothic and erotic novels.

A lot of older Romanian intellectuals were suspicious of Ellade and are hardly to be blamed for it. His scholarly achievements in those years were the first versions of *Yoga* and the book that was later to become *The Forge and the Crucible*, as well as a good two-volume critical edition of the nineteenth-century Romanian philologist and historian Haidu (who was sold, but somewhat difficult to judge by any but a small group of international specialists. His novels were interesting, with experimental passages that remind one today of Huxley, Olds, even Joyce, yet they smack of the sensational and exotic. His two books of criticism were influenced by Chesterton and Papini and seemed - disconcerting or amusingly - Ellade himself explains his exorbitant productivity of these years by the nagging and desperate feeling that time was in short supply both for him and for the society in which he lived, a feeling soon vindicated, he says, by the veil of silence that fell over Eastern Europe after 1945.

This may well be so, but his work in those years undoubtedly expressed also the intellectual atmosphere of inter-war Bucharest: hectic, vibrant, brimming over in its variety. Ellade's book throws light on all the restless and innovative groups of intellectuals who were then clashing with each other precisely because he is telling not their story, but his own. The most interesting among these groups was called *Criticism*, which

## The encyclopedic urge

By Virgil Nemoianu

MIRCEA ELIADE:  
Autobiography  
Volume I: 1907-1937: Journey East, Journey West  
Translated by MacLinscott Ricketts  
335pp. Harper and Row. £12.50.  
0 06 062142 7

Mircea Eliade is known by many English-speaking readers as a historian of religion and an analyst of myth, and by a few as the author of fantastic novels and short stories.

Hardly anybody is aware of the huge mass of other writings on which his publications are based. Ellade tells somewhere of how he keeps three kinds of "running commentaries": his scientific notes, fragments and projects; his regular (or social) diary; and finally a "secret diary" destined for the eyes of its own author; this, if I understand him right, he periodically destroys. Extracts from the regular diary (about one third of it) are arranged and grouped for publication every ten years or so (although many manuscripts from Ellade's younger years have been lost or are kept in custody in Bucharest). To make up for this loss but also, perhaps, to summarize in a continuous narrative form what was originally a fragmentary self-reflection, we now have Ellade's autobiography. Most chapters of the present volume were published between 1964 and 1966 in Romanian emigré journals (and partially in book form).

The book is clearly written, with a pleasant candour. Of course, Ellade can afford to be low key: the facts themselves provide the heady stuff. He published his first article when he was fourteen and when he was eighteen, he celebrated his one hundredth publication - most of these were articles on popular entomology in journals for students. At twenty, he was a columnist for one of the leading dailies in Bucharest, writing on virtually any topic he chose (cultural, social, intellectual), as well as contributor to a wide range of other journals. He then received a stipend from the Maharajah of Kassimbazar (on the basis of a perfunctory letter dashed off during an Italian trip) and spent almost three years studying Indian philosophy and mysticism, part of them meditating in a hut in the Himalayas. By the time he was twenty-five, he had taken his doctorate in philosophy, was teaching Buddhism, Yoga, Aristotle and Cusanus, and was becoming a best-selling author of Gothic and erotic novels.

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for a short while managed to establish a dialogue on modernity between young intellectuals of the most diverse orientations, from Marxists to nationalists and mystics. That the group soon broke up was a clear symptom of the deteriorating political and social situation in Romania. Ellade was in this political environment and yet not entirely of it; for him it seems to have had a kind of dream-like unreality. The same unreality is seen also in some of the bitter-sweet love affairs which he recounts (one with a glamorous actress with anthroposophical ambitions, another with the passionate and intelligent daughter of his Indian professor).

The main interest of the book lies in the fact that it is an "archaeology of knowledge". Ellade here explains the circumstances in which some of his most fruitful and intriguing ideas were produced, such as the "concomitance" of the sacred by the profane. He also explains how his Indian visit led him to postulate the existence of a broad level of neolithic religiosity ("cosmic" religiosity) which constituted the vast base on which the great systematic and historical religions (monotheistic or not) could rise. He had found that beliefs and rituals of the Carpathian shepherds and Danubian peasants bore a marked resemblance to those of the earliest pre-Aryan inhabitants of the Indian plains. He thus began to develop one of the most appealing sides of his philosophy: the unity of the deeper strata of Eastern and Western thought.

Even more fascinating is the lush undergrowth of discarded projects that accumulated in the first thirty years of his writing life. In 1935, for instance, he had plans for some twenty books, some of them social or fantastic novels, others on religious symbolism, myth, Oriental alchemy, a history of Indian philosophy, a study of death rituals in Romanian folklore and so on. As a teenager, he wrote several autobiographical novels, as well as a huge cosmological treatise, *Memories of a Lead Soldier*, in which the atoms and molecules of a toy were made to tell the natural history of the universe. All these seem now to have been lost.

How did Ellade get so much done? As an adolescent, he was a Boy Scout (one episode when the boat he was in got caught in a thunderstorm at sea is both amusing and dramatic as recounted here), and even if as a young man he delighted in long evenings of talk with his friends, he imposed genuine hardships on himself by the exercise of his will and relaxed by taking deliberate imaginary plunges into alien historical or geographical settings. The most remarkable experiment of this sort was surely Ellade's attempt to make do with less sleep: when he was about fourteen, he started going to sleep five minutes later each night and also set his alarm clock to wake him up five minutes earlier - until he got down to only four hours' sleep a night.

Why was he so active? The answer to this question lies buried in the list of his never-implemented projects, which includes a history of Romanian encyclopedists. The aspirations and the anguish of Romanian intellectuals, who thought of themselves as provincial outposts on the confines of European culture, often found a kind of over-compensation in such a thirst for universalism, in prodigies of (disorderly) knowledge, and in resorting to an aesthetic management of their material. Their heroes in this direction were Prince Cantemir in the early eighteenth century, the critic Ellade Rădulescu in the nineteenth (Ellade's father, an army officer, changed his family name, so he claimed, out of admiration for him), and the historian Iorga in the early twentieth century. Ellade was clearly seeking for a place in this tradition, and his autobiography (the English translation is accurate, but dull and risks too close to the original, though it has a good index) reveals both his motives and his methods. All those who are familiar with his achievements since 1937 will be made aware how the mixture of encyclopedic and aesthetic impulses has shaped his entire career.

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## Country connections

By Jasper Griffin

CHARLES SEGAL:  
Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral  
Essays on Theocritus and Virgil  
348pp. Guildford: Princeton  
University Press. £17.40 (paperback,  
£5.30).  
0 691 06475 X

Theocritus has received uneven treatment from scholars in this century. The great commentary of Gow (1952), connoisseur and collector of Dedic, combines exact erudition with a poetic sense of the idiosyncrasy which was the dark side of Housman's legacy to Cambridge. No aesthetic comment, no subjective judgment stains the white radiance of those 640 precise and patient pages. To work through such a commentary on such a text - the witty and versatile poet, sometimes exquisite, sometimes indecent, confronting the imperishable polymath - is an experience which has a savour of its own to palates with a relish for In Kenneth Dover (1971) is less rigorous, but its trenchant common sense, vigorous conciseness, and absolute freedom from every sort of nonsense, still left a good deal unsaid. The Birkbeck College seminar is currently applying to all the Hellenistic poets an approach which makes Gow look trivial, finding, it seems, their sole interest in the details of the relation of their language to that of Homer.

A case could still be made, discreditable to modern scholarship, for

saying that the most sympathetic book on the poet is that of Legrand, published in 1898. But about 1966 other voices began to be heard, especially in America; voices which certainly cannot be charged with aridity, or indeed with conciseness. One cannot imagine Dover saying, as Charles Segal says, "What makes Theocritus' pastoral fascinating and difficult is the total incorporation of the symbolic levels of meaning into the surface structure", or "Statically does indeed close the poem, but it is still a de-idealized ideal, not a solidly attained fact", or "This combination of a dynamic and a symmetrical structure is also expressive of the two planes on which the narrative moves, the dramatic and the symbolical".

Something similar is true of Virgil's *Eclogues*. The large collection of historical facts, and speculation on which H. J. Rose published in 1942 under the title *The Eclogues of Virgil* gave answers to such dry questions of that day as "Where was Virgil's farm?" and "Exactly how did the land confiscations work?" Here too a series of recent publications has lifted the discussion on to a altogether loftier plane. Segal writes: "Here the pastoral reality of streams and meadows is one with the universal and symbolic 'streams of song' from which the pastoral revival flows", and "Love and poetry are joined to create an order which overlaps the dualities (man-nature, sense-spirit) of our world" - sentences which would have made Rose stare and gasp. What Segal now offers is a collection of fifteen of his articles on these two subjects.

The larger half of the book is concerned with the seven pastoral poems of Theocritus. The rest of that poet's productions, with the exception of *Idyll* 2, is hardly mentioned (it is striking, too, that Segal virtually disregards the rest of extant Hellenistic poetry: the name of Callimachus hardly occurs). The omission is a damaging one. Theocritus was not a pastoral poet who happened also to write other things - Segal observes almost with surprise that "he can write *Idylls* which, properly speaking, are not bucolic at all" - but a sophisticated and subtle literary man who wrote in a wide range of styles. Some of his poems are alone; some of his mimics are set in the company; some of those set in the country are pastoral. His pastoral poems present a very wide range of

level, style, and dignity. Had Segal thought of Theocritus in that way, a way which seems to me inescapable, he might not have been so eager to assume that "as the founder of pastoral poetry Theocritus stands in closer connection with its mythical elements and their doubtless ritual origin", and to treat "the pastoral genre" as a clearly separate and clearly serious one. There is virtually no real evidence for any ritual origins, and nothing that we know of Theocritus makes it probable that he would have taken such things seriously if there were.

The most rewarding of the Theocritean pieces seems to me to be that entitled "Thematic coherence in Theocritus' bucolic *Idylls*" (1977), which shows how the same subject-matter and the same motifs recur on different stylistic levels in the different poems. Harder to accept are those which plead for the existence of mythical patterns in the *Idylls*; hardest of all, perhaps, the pervasive desire, here as in so much contemporary scholarship, that all the poems shall be about poetry. Even such an apparently unpromising poem as Theocritus 4 turns out to be "a dialogue between a sentimental and realistic poetics". Both here and with the difficult *Idyll* 7, Segal is forced to special pleading to make his pattern fit. Poetry is, also, we find without surprise, the theme of those *Eclogues* which he handles.

The method is to develop patterns of words and moods within each poem. The arguments are ingenious, and the results are in one sense plausible, but in another unsettling. It is for instance significant that separate discussions lead to quite different views of the same passages. Of the cup described in Theocritus 1 we read "On the cup joy predominates", but also "It presents a world of fruitless amorality and hard work". Of the *Eclogues* we read "the last two poems are positive, optimistic, expansive", but again "In *Eclogue* 10 the destructive forces within man are in the ascendant"; this somber end to the *Eclogue* Book. These are not isolated pronouncements but form part of extensive schematic accounts of the poems. All literary criticism must contain a subjective element; but the fact that such contradictions are presented with equal plausibility and equal aplomb is an indication that the procedures which produce them are subjective in another and a deeply disquieting sense.

## The end of Captain Haddock

Their heads propped on their elbows at the table are lost in adventures of Tintin and Captain Haddock. The kitchen grows a beard of fragrance curling with pomade and vinegar.

Is it Captain Haddock in the pan cursing softly in his coat of battle? Whose face is running on the steamed up glass weeping itself into malformations?

George Szirtes







# Highly vocal

By Anthony Burgess

PETER GILES:

The Counter Tenor  
With additional material by David  
Mallinder  
221pp. Muller. £12.95.  
0 584 10474 X

Alfred Deller, the counter-tenor whose artistry has done much to rehabilitate a reach of the male voice too long neglected, was, in the 1950s, waiting to go on at the Royal Festival Hall. He was standing near Sir Malcolm Sargent and the leader of the orchestra. The latter, who had better remain anonymous, said to Sargent, all too audibly: "I see we've got the bearded lady with us." Sargent, according to Peter Giles, "the epitome of the English Gentleman, affected not to hear and is said to have brushed some imaginary dust off his sleeve". The anecdote indicates a prejudice against the high male voice which is based on the pitch of the speaking voice as an index of sex. As James Bowman (himself a distinguished follower of Deller) says in his foreword to this book, "The fact that we sing at a higher pitch than the other male voices does not instantly make us peculiar breed apart - distant relatives of the castrati. There is no 'mystique'. We are just singers who, for one reason or another, have preferred to develop the upper reaches of our voices, and this has become a natural means of vocal expression."

Mr Giles, rightly, spends some time in his book - the first ever on the counter-tenor - dealing with the phenomenon of the castrato or eunuch (properly *castrato* - devirilized or emasculated). The image of papal sheers snipping off testicles to ensure the continuation into adulthood of a fine boy's voice is not strictly accurate. Kingsley Amis's novel *The Alteration* is historically correct in presenting the owner of the voice as possessing the legal right to accept or reject the proposed operation, right where in his ironical dénouement, where the hero becomes what he has voluntarily rejected through a disease of the testicles. A lot of Italian castrati swam into fame through a morbid accident. As for those boys who put music before the joys of sex, it was usually a matter of dosing them with opium, placing them in a warm bath, then snipping through the life-lines, so that the testicles eventually shrivelled away. It was a voluntary matter, and the *potestas clivium* never came into it.

It is necessary to spend some time with the castrati before dealing with the counter-tenor, since those "brilliant artificial voices" eclipsed for a long time the natural falsetto or counter-tenor. There was a castrato in the papal choir as early as 1562, but the last of the Sistina falsetti, Giovanni di Sanctis, died in 1625. England clung to the counter-tenor until the castrato, with all things musically Italian, became popular in the time of Handel. Henry Purcell was himself a fine counter-tenor. Incidentally, the last of the papal castrati, Alessandro Moreschi, who died in 1924, made some gramophone

records in 1903-04. It is not a great voice, and the quality of the recording is inevitably poor, but the castrato sound is at least available to those interested in it, like Mr Amis, fascinated by the phenomenon.

There is not, despite the stupidity of that orchestral leader, as much prejudice against the counter-tenor today as there would have been in, say, the Victorian era. Pop-singers favour the higher, or even falsetto, reach of the voice; unisex has been, in some ways, a healthy solvent of a crass and brutal polarity. When Alfred Deller's voice erupted on the air or the concert-platform, it was an older generation of musicians that was disturbed, not the possessors of an innocent ear. The exploitation of the higher reach of the male voice springs from no mental or physical morbidity. In theory, anyone can reach the vibration of his vocal chords in a single segment, thus ensuring a high range which can take advantage of the vibration of an adult sounding chamber - not possible to boy alto.

We accept the four-part mixed chorus - S A T B - without being altogether satisfied with it. Female and male voices do not blend well, any more than (to push the range downwards) trombones blend well with the bass tuba. Wagner saw or heard the need for total homogeneity in his wind sections - hence the development of the heckelphone to complete the family of oboes, and the bass trumpet and the contrabass trombone to ensure a uniformity of tone in the brass. The church choir, with its trebles and male altos, may be regarded as one of the fruits of St

Paul's misogyny, but the oratorio tradition, related to the operatic, accepts the two sexes not only because female voices are adult and hence powerful. Yet the female alto has an unfortunate wooliness and the counter-tenor, which theoretically could replace it, is probably the sound which composers hear in their brains when they pen the second choral line. Unfortunately, there are not yet enough counter-tenors around to be massed chorally. The counter-tenor, like the castrato, is a rare and brilliant solo phenomenon, and it might have been even rarer had not Michael Tippett heard the late great Deller in Canterbury and given him the encouragement he needed. We are thankful to have his voice preserved for all time, granted perhaps its finest exploitation in the Oberon role of Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, written specially for Deller. And we are thankful that he has followers like James Bowman, John Bowman, Paul Eswood and Mr Giles himself.

Giles's book is brief, but it has some of the qualities of a comprehensive guide to counter-tenorism or -ship. There are photographs and a discography, an account of the counter-tenor in history, and an admirable appendix on "The Counter Tenor as an Artistic Phenomenon". He considers the essential "Englishness" of the type of voice and relates it to the "love of line" which Nikolaus Pevsner extols in his *Reith Lectures* collected as *The Englishness of English Art*, the cult of idiosyncrasy, and the persistent conservatism which, by some

It is decidedly otherworldly, inhabiting a strange unreal world somewhere in the head, indefinably more than falsetto. It is eccentric and irrational: men do not normally sing as high as women, therefore who but the English would favour over many centuries a purely natural voice which does? The counter tenor is itself the result of English conservatism. Its continued existence stems from English reluctance to embrace the new or recognise when the game is up, the battle lost!

Shaw, in *Man and Superman*, has a counter-tenor in his infernal quartet. "Ah, here you are, my friend," says Don Juan to the Statue. "Why don't you learn to sing the splendid music Mozart has written for you?" The statue replies: "Unfortunately I have written it for a bass voice. Mine is a counter tenor." Should we take that "unluckily" seriously? For a decidedly otherworldly voice might have been in order. Let us imagine that invitation to supper soaring over the transiting House slowly and in silence. He then stopped suddenly and said to his interviewer: "You were very kind; but I found one of your questions very difficult - the personal question. You know, a Macmillan does not wear his heart on his sleeve."

# A true-blue radical

By Esmond Wright

NIGEL FISHER:

Harold Macmillan  
A Biography  
404pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.  
£12.95.  
0 297 77914 1

As if to emphasize his detachment, Nigel Fisher has not gone to the House of Macmillan to publish his biography, and he manages with considerable skill not to total success to distance himself from one who is, still, in some measure, his hero. It was Macmillan's *The Middle Way* which, he says, led him to become a Conservative, and as an MP, he was much under the influence of the progressive "one Nation", of which Macmillan, R. A. Butler and later Harold Macmillan were the chief exponents. He even allowed his subject to read and comment on the text, and confesses to a disappointment. "I had hoped to write a definitive biography of this complex and remarkable man. He preferred it to be a political biography, so some of the more personal aspects of his life have been omitted at his request. I am content to respect his privacy." Macmillan has always been remarkably successful in keeping up his guard.

After being interviewed on a BBC programme in Glasgow in April 1963, the then Prime Minister walked along the corridor in Broadcasting House slowly and in silence. He then stopped suddenly and said to his interviewer: "You were very kind; but I found one of your questions very difficult - the personal question. You know, a Macmillan does not wear his heart on his sleeve."

In a long life - he is now eighty-eight - Macmillan has played many parts, and one can never be sure which is the "real" Macmillan, if indeed he exists other than in the parts he played. Lady Dorothy said, at the time of their marriage in April 1920 at St Margaret's, Westminster, that she thought she was marrying a publisher. But he was already much more: comfortably middle-class by birth and upbringing and much influenced by a strong American mother, he carried round with him throughout his life a photograph of the croft on Arran from which his grandfather Daniel had come; he was Eton and Balliol, a bookish and reflective man of words steeped in the classics and with a mandarin and studied style in the House that was the careful product of an Oxford Union training; but he was also a soldier, with the Grenadier Guards, Loos and the Somme behind him and wounds to recover. Marriage to a duke's daughter allowed him easy transit across class lines - in Butler's phrase, he could "associate happily with the overdog" - and whatever the Scottish habits of work, the plain-living and hard-thinking images in his mind, his life-style was that of an English grandee, who felt at ease with lords and as prime minister left to his PR men whatever meetings with journalists might be necessary. And from 1924 there was yet another world to add, that of Stockton-on-Tees, which (except for the years 1929-31) he represented in Parliament from 1924 to 1945.

It is indeed probably true to say that it was the accident of his selection of Stockton as a seat to fight in 1923 that made Macmillan the radical, and in the end the politician, he was. In his autobiography he writes movingly of a Teesside to which he came as an alien but whose problems gravely worried him and for which he had a real affection. He had some sympathy for Oswald Mosley's similar policies in 1930, before Mosley formed his New Party; and he had sympathy too with Neville Chamberlain and Lloyd George as social reformers. Richard Crossman used to argue that had Macmillan crossed the floor in the 1930s - like Churchill before him - nothing could have stopped his becoming leader of the Labour Party.

In the 1930s he grew restive under the MacDonald-Baldwin coalition and he expressed his views not only by abstentions in the House but in a series of tracts and books like *The Next Five Years* and *The Middle Way*. As he later explained, what he had tried to do in the latter volume was to set out a definite plan by which there could be reorganization of industrial production and distribution, and new methods applied to import and export problems, as well as to finance and investment, so as to bring about the degree of central strategic planning necessary in modern society, while preserving the tactical independence of industry and commerce as a whole, and defending political and economic liberty. In this way, by an appropriate combination of methods, not merely could freedom be preserved, but the maximum and the most efficient production and distribution of wealth organized. In a sense, this was a plea for planned capitalism.

He talks, said Tom Jones, "very much like a professor of Economics." He became leader of a group of young Conservatives (sometimes sarcastically described as the "WACA") to distinguish them from the "Forty Thieves" which included Bob Boothby, Eustace Percy, Rob Hudson and Terence O'Connor. To the *Socialist Review* he was a "Socialist in disguise". When he was re-elected at Stockton in 1935 it was as an obviously dissident Tory, a believer in the heresy of planning. It might hardly seem radical now, but it was so then.

lanka he was warmly greeted: "Hello, Harold, come in." This, one notes, was the point where Eisenhower suddenly found him acceptable: until then it had been hard going between the Generalissimo and the Minister Resident.

Macmillan's achievement in North Africa was both political and personal. The model now was not Keynes but Castlereagh and Salisbury. He brought Graud and de Gaulle together; he acted as a successful

servative. And nothing warms like success.

These two central threads in the career (which might be called the Stockton Man and the Suez Man) Fisher disentangles expertly, even if along now familiar lines. Thus far he has little to do except summarize his subject's own record. Macmillan's more than 4,000 pages serve him as quarry - a faithful and detailed, albeit rather flat, account of Macmillan's political life and times; Roy Jenkins once called it "Mac minute by minute". There are 4,000 pages of lesser quality reduced to 370. Macmillan's five pages on the Spanish Civil War are reduced to six lines; his 250 on Italy and Greece are down to seventeen. Fisher is gentler on Rab than was Macmillan; he is much more open about his relations with Eden; he does not hide, as Macmillan does, the collusion with Israel at Suez. Inevitably some of Macmillan's sparkling quotes are missing. ("The Second War was fought by great generals from their caravans. The First War was conducted by men of lesser quality from their chateaux.") The survey of Supremac's achievements recounts the over-active busy-ness of the Prime Ministership: Africa for the "wind of change", Paris in 1960 for the Summit, Washington to pose as an avuncular guide to a young president, Nassau, Skybolt, Polaris and the Test-Ban Treaty. No doubt it was all intoxicating, for his drug had never been rank or title but power and influence; in Volume Five of his own life-story, Macmillan devotes 400 out of 500 pages to this summation. The economic problems and the Treasury warnings were brushed aside; there were now fewer speeches in the House. For a time he was opposed to having a PRO. That could all be left to Question Time in the House and to parliamentary statements and debates. "After all," he said, "we politicians are trained in the art of evasion."

It is when he reaches the summer of 1961 that Fisher begins to write his own book. He is explicit about the mistakes, which Macmillan later recognized as such himself. First came the painful dismissal of Selwyn Lloyd, hidden as it was behind the sack of six other ministers, the night of the long knives of July 1961 for ever caught by the savagery of Jeremy Thorpe's comment: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his friends for his life." Fisher says generously that "the strain and fatigue of high office may well have impaired his hitherto almost impeccable political judgement", a view shared by Lord Fraser of Kilmorack, the ablest member of Macmillan's secretariat. The error compounded by the Vassall and Pompidou affair and the satire of *That Was The Week That Was* and of *Private Eye* in 1962-63, marked the sudden appearance of a new image, that of a tired old man out of touch with the mood of the day. In a speech in the House that was for once out of character, he admitted his lack of knowledge of and distaste for the *demi-monde*, a raffish, theatrical, bohemian society "where no one really knows anyone, and everyone is darling". This was no longer the worldly-wise sceptic, aware of human frailties, but an old-style Calvinist that his grandfather would have recognized, bewildered by the permissive society.

To this he added the most serious error of all, the timing of his resignation in 1963. The prostate illness was real and acute enough, but he "could easily have delayed the announcement of his resignation", as he himself subsequently recognized. The leadership struggle was as a result fought out in the 1963 Blackpool Conference in full view of the television cameras. It was so heady an occasion that it swept Lord Halifax into his own errors of judgement - and Halldam was clearly Macmillan's first choice, and embittered Selwyn Lloyd, whom he saw as the abject of the next generation, the two men who, he thought, had "real genius". In permitting the succession to be publicly debated on television, Macmillan - whatever his state of

link between the British and the Americans he was skilful in the delicate negotiations over the surrender of Italy and still more over the communist coup in Greece. As Crossman wrote, "I suspect it was in Algeria, where he could do all the thinking and take all the decisions while he took all the credit, that Harold Macmillan first realized his own capacity for supreme leadership and developed that streak of intellectual recklessness which was to be the cause both of his success and of his failure when he finally reached No. 10."

He was, said his aide John Wynn-dham, "vicerey of the Mediterranean by stealth".

It was in this period too that he made the contacts - Churchill and Eden, Alexander and Eisenhower, Murphy and Bedell Smith - that were to be so important in the post-war years, not only for himself but for his country. If there is a hero in these years it was General Alexander. If there is a figure whom Macmillan failed fully to understand it was de Gaulle. This, too, was a portent. After his success at Housling and on Eden's smooth succession in 1955, it was natural that he should go to the Foreign Office. He expected to stay for a long time, and it seemed likely to be the climax of his career. The North African experience gave him - perhaps for the first time - confidence in himself, a taste for the Great Game, and an ease on the world stage, whether Africa or Moscow, Washington, Nassau or the Paris de Gaulle. Arguably it gave him too much confidence, the illusion that he spoke for a great power, that resignations of colleagues (like those of Thorneycroft, Powell, and Birch in 1958) were just "little local difficulties", even if they were over fundamental economic issues. It set him permanently in the role of Superman, the post-Suez magician, urbane and Olympian, unflappable and witty. His achievement at Housling Minister helped at party conferences. But what counted most was the style and the grouse-moor persona; however radical the message, and his radicalism was muted now, the man was seen as a true-blue Con-

Harold Macmillan at a pheasant shoot in the winter 1969-70, from the book reviewed here.

What destroyed him in the end was his own cynicism. He was for a long time a master at tactics. What he had (or has) in rare abundance were style and charm, elegance and the grand manner. In the end - though not at first - television gave him charisma. These qualities owed nothing either to Stockton or to Suez, but came from his taste for the ways, not of a Tory Demagogue but of a Whig grandee, even if he saw himself as in the line of descent from Disraeli (whose estate had, after all, been bought for him by just such a Whig grandee; for Portlands read Cavendishes). His mind at its best could be discursive and scintillating and - until 1962 - touched by a constant sense of adventure and romance. Brendan Bracken wrote of him in 1955 that he was remarkable, imaginative and amusing, "and possessed of a judgement that is almost always wrong".

From 1955 on he played a series of parts, and played them brilliantly for almost seven years. But throughout these years he was neglectful of the economic realities of Britain - which a longer spell at the Treasury might have given him - and of the economic and political possibilities of European growth. Paradoxically, these were the areas which twenty and twenty-five years before had been those of his greatest strength. The radicalism and irreverence had gone. Indeed, as with Atlee by 1949, as with Eden within nine months of becoming prime minister, as with Harold Wilson by 1967, after a brilliant beginning came a sad end. But while his luck held, he and his country never had it so good. And he is fortunate to have attracted to himself among a legion of devotees, so able, honest and readable a biographer as Sir Nigel Fisher.

*Ministers of the Crown* by D. A. Pickrliff (135pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £7.95. 0 7100 0916) lists the holders of ministerial posts, senior and junior, in most cases from the earliest known date. It is the publisher's belief that there does not exist any other work in which this information can be found; "only *Haydn's Book of Dates*, now nearly a century old, has attempted anything similar". There have been seventy-one Prime Ministers. The first Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal was Herfast (1068-1070). He was immediately followed by Osmund, Maurice and Gerard. The first Postmaster General (1655) was John Thurloe.

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## Jonathan Cape

## commentary

## Serving at a shrine

By Richard Mayne

Céleste  
Camden Plaza Cinema

It sounds an impossible task: a film in German, with English subtitles, about a great French writer. Joseph Losey's famous project of bringing Proust to the screen, with the help of Harold Pinter and Barbara Bray, seems to have gone into eclipse: now, after all, could a film do justice to so elaborate a masterpiece, and one so intimately dependent on language and its prismatic tensions? And *Céleste* is not even about *A la recherche du temps perdu*: its subject is not Proust himself, lying pale and precocious in his littered bed, distilling the endless manuscript. No: the subject is Céleste Alberte, his faithful housekeeper - nursemaid, secretary, skivvy - not her substitute, a *gouvernante*, during the last eight years of his life.

And the film, like Céleste's life, is virtually confined to Proust's apartment. All we see, for the most part, are two rooms: the impenetrable sick-room, from which the bell shrills to summon Céleste from the kitchen. Hour after hour, she sits there, and we watch her, waiting, while the clock ticks. Then the ritual: hot milk, carefully poured; boiling water; the coffee filter machine; the tray; the quiet obedience to the bell. Only very briefly do we quit the apartment - for the last, sad 1914 trip to Cabourg; for reminiscences about the death of Céleste's mother at Auxillies; for lingering, yearning looks at a grey, deserted Paris. Apart from Céleste's husband, no one comes to visit until near the end. The Poulet Quartet - played here by the Bartholomew - arrive to perform César-Frank's quartet in D; later, the Goncourt committee and the doctors, including Proust's brother, fuss and bluster about. Otherwise, all seems silence and devotion, service at a living shrine.

So how on earth has Percy Adlon made such a gripping film? First, by subduing our expectations, and making us attend - as the layout of poetry does when we see it on the page. The credits are deliberately stealthy. On the right of the screen, through an open doorway, we see Céleste (played by Eva Matte) sit-

ting on her kitchen chair, a patient figure from an interior by Vermeer. On the left, the credits, punctuated by single phrases from the César Frank. Does this tell us, forbiddingly, 'Art film ahead?' Hardly, but it prepares us to watch and listen intently. Then, once we accept the film's restricted space, it comes to life like a stage. As in the work of Ermanno Olmi, everyday objects and actions take on their full significance in the irrecoverable moment.

In this sense, Adlon's film is truly Proustian. At the end of it, when Proust is dead, the tired whiskey-husk of Paul Helleu's deshabillé, with the great work a scatter of acrawled paper and the world collapsed, we feel the poignant pointlessness when Céleste snips a lock of his hair to cradle in her hands. We know that the book will live for him - a monument? A kind of immortality? But we also know that Céleste never read it all: that what mattered to her was having served the man she described as 'un grand seigneur' who was also a great tyrant, and a great baby, and a genius.

She waited fifty years before telling her story to Georges Belmont, who made it of the book *Monseigneur Proust*, on which this film is based. A remarkable book - artful, yet truthful; faithful to Céleste, yet full of deeper resonance, informed by knowledge and love of Proust's great work. The film can only select from the storehouse: it omits, for example, the changes of address - and, most memorable for many people, the book's final story, about the opel that Proust gave Céleste, who treasured it, then one day lost it. It turned up again - in a mouthful of salad that her daughter was eating.

Proust, in *Céleste*, is played by Jürgen Arndt. He looks amazingly authentic, save in some of his movements, capering to show Céleste how people had behaved at dinner. His eyes, those brooding, hooded, boiled eyes, tell all that he felt. And Eva Matte looks everything that can be imagined from pictures of Céleste in old age. After a while, even the German on the soundtrack ceases to seem intrusive. As a study of master and servant, feudally free with each other within the limits both accept; as a recreation of Proust and Céleste; as an evocation of past time; as a series of genre interiors - this film is a delight.



Madonna and Child with the Infant St John, a marble torso by Michelangelo. One of the items in the Royal Academy's collection, which is on show in the Royal Academy Retrospective exhibition until May 23.

## A cotton-wool life

By Patricia Craig

Conversation with a Cupboard Man  
Lyric Studio Theatre, Hammersmith

Ian McEwan's story, which is part allegory and part case history, transfers easily to the stage, requiring no adaptation at all and very few props: a table, a chair, a plate, knife and fork, three empty Coca Cola bottles and an enormous wardrobe serve to create an appropriate setting. The conversation is really a monologue, with the audience standing in for the postulated social worker who listens to the 'cupboard man's' unimpassioned account of his vicissitudes.

It's a sorry story. The speaker (well played by Robin Edwards, in crumpled dressing gown, socks and pyjamas, all Cockney dejection and

defensiveness) embodies the awful effects of mothers' efforts to keep their children young: 'When I was two inches taller than her she was still trying to tie a big round my neck'. A protected babyhood followed by an abrupt growing-up - and truly the adult world, as the narrator finds it, has little to recommend it. It is a place of institutions, menial jobs, thieving, mockery, ugliness, deformity, perversion of the sexual instinct, subservience, deviousness and cruelty. He learns that if someone tries to roast you in an oven, however playfully, you may retaliate by tipping a pan of boiling oil into his lap. He also learns that you will probably end up craving the conditions that ruined you in the first place - in his case, 'the old cotton-wool life, warm and safe'.

Hence the cupboard, the hopelessness and the inertia - and the two views of mother's womb as a place of horror (the heated oven) and comfort (a wardrobe well padded with blankets and cushions). Though the dramatization, like the story, is not without its moments of humour ('I'd rather be lying on the floor gurgling to myself than talking to you') it's the seediness and abnormality of things that are stressed - to good effect. Here you have a portrait of someone who is the skeleton in his own cupboard.

has a purpose, nothing is extraneous. The changes have had, therefore, a knock-on effect: they may have made characters more credible, but have simultaneously undone the carefully constructed machinery of the plot. A cunning criminal scheme has to depend on chance, rather than foresight, and Poirot's little gray cells are aided by coincidence, not logic.

The reader of one of these stories waits impatiently for the murder so that Poirot can get down to the real business of the book - detection. In the film the reverse occurs. After the murder, with an endless series of flashbacks, and recapitulations, a numbing boredom begins to set in, which even Poirot, Ustinov, in desperation adopting the mannerisms of a M. Hulot, cannot dispel. Other characters - James Mason and Sylvia Miles as a married pair of Broadway producers; Nicholas Clay as a handsome young Irishman and Jane Birkin as his mousy wife - are either given no opportunity to dispel the gloom, or muffed the one they receive. And the amusing, bitchy exchanges between Maggie Smith and her old friend and rival Ariana Marshall (Diana Rigg), vamp and show business star, unfortunately come to a premature end.

It's certainly always beautiful to look at Poirot, but leave after the murder, and return to read Agatha

## Mild menace of the critic

By Robert Hewison

PEN Writers' Day  
Purcell Room

PEN's Writers' Days are organized for the benefit and enjoyment of writers, and British writers feel under threat. Though Lord Goodman's avuncular after-lunch speech made reference to the *Romans* tris, these writers feel menaced, not by the censor or the gaoler, but by the critic.

Or so Margaret Drabble would have us believe. This was the topic of her lecture 'Professionals and Amateurs: the Effects of Literary Criticism on the novelist'. Which was delivered at PEN's fourth Writers' Day on March 13. It had been publicized in advance as a major attack on the critics, but Margaret Drabble is something of a critic herself, and to the best tradition of English literary controversy, it turned out to be milder than that. Miss Drabble was not angry, but worried. Her most polemical stroke was to describe critics as the professionals, implying that novelists are amateurs, though her own position makes the distinction ambiguous. Since she concludes her review of her early works in the *TLS* 'so censorious, but so bracing', it was plain that her complaint was not about the existence of critics, but about the terms of her current relationship with them.

The establishment of University English departments has professionalized the art of analysis and discrimination, and has produced - according to Drabble - an invidious self-consciousness among writers: 'the novel and the novelist have suffered from the stress on the novel as an art form'. It has caused a departmentalization among critics, and also publishers. Both divide novels and novelists into those that are serious and those that are bestsellers (though she might have added that critics and publishers have opposing priorities). Similarly, the critical tradition divides readers into the serious and unserious, with an implied contempt for the unserious that appears to include the majority of the female population. 'When I hear about keeping up standards, I go into another room.'

While most novels are dismissed as entertainment, the serious novelist is driven into the arms of the university, and for economic reasons cannot live any other way, even though the campus novel that often results is a narrow work, the closing of a small circle. (In a digression on feminist criticism Miss Drabble complained of being 'pestered by students who would monitor her creative process. Though some critical insights were

## commentary

## Family features

By John Gage

Lionel Constable  
Tate Gallery

When the work of John Constable's youngest son (1828-1887) first emerged into public notice at the Exhibition in 1976, the sub-editors, if not the critics, were enthusiastic. 'A Star is born in Art', they wrote: 'like father, like son...'. Certainly Lionel is a case of 'like father' in the narrow sense, but this modest and useful exhibition (which runs until April 4) shows that it would be difficult to launch him as a palmer in his own right. That his identity has been essentially a by-product of the sifting of his father's work, is now easy to see, and most of the preliminary identification has, in fact, depended on external factors like discovery of dated sketches and Lionel's own photographs of some of his subjects. Although I still recall the shock when one of my own favourite 'Constables' in the Tate Gallery, the so-called 'Near Stoke-by-Nayland' was re-attributed to Lionel, it is now perfectly clear that his work can be distinguished from his father's purely stylistic grounds, some examples far more easily than others. Lionel's touch is often lighter than his father's, his modelling of foliage is less three-dimensional, his sense of space more obvious and his colour less mellow; yet these distinctions are rather those of 'handwriting' than of style in its expansive sense. The style is still firmly that of John Constable, and we are dealing not with a 'discovery', but with an attractive and undemanding landscape artist whose chief function now is, perhaps, to be a thorn in the flesh to the collectors of old and dealers in John Constable's work. So, far from showing that Lionel is a fine and neglected artist, this exhibition shows how often he is mistaken for his father's, the exhibi-

tion diminishes his stature precisely because we have to keep running to the Constable room next door at the Tate to be quite sure how it is that Lionel is different.

What is perhaps most strikingly interesting about this exhibition is what it tells us about the taste in landscape in the mid-nineteenth century, and on this, the excellent catalogue by Leslie Parris and Ian Fleming-Williams (*Lionel Constable* 11 pp. Tate Gallery, £5.95, 0 905005 38 4) is unfortunately silent. Lionel had a wide range of his father's work from which to take his models, but he chose to concentrate on John's styles between about 1812 and 1820, both for his nile end for his pencil sketches (for it now seems that a period of oil-sketching in the Lake District in 1806 was reconstructed entirely on the basis of Lionel's work), and, more importantly, on the least pretentious of these works, which would, of course, have offered far fewer technical problems to him than the large exhibition pieces. From 1849 to 1855 Lionel exhibited at the Royal Academy a number of small oils in a loose and sketch-like style, and without the qualification of 'sketch' or 'study' in their titles, of a type which his father would never have dreamt of making public, or even of selling. The little sketches of Constable's work by F.W. Watts, also done about the same time, fall into this category; and they may well reflect the notion of John Constable as an inveterate oil-sketcher and a 'natural' painter which was, as I have said, in the two editions of his classic *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, which came out in 1843 and 1845, some years after the painter's death. Lionel Constable thus provides an important link in the legitimization of the oil sketch as a public art, which was completed by the New English Art Club about the time of the First World War. This very pleasurable exhibition offers a good deal of food for thought.

## Coming out of the gallery

By Tanya Harrod

Art and Architecture: A Conference  
A New Partnership: An Exhibition  
ICA

In 1956 the Whitechapel show *This is tomorrow* explored the possibilities of cooperation between architects, painters and sculptors. In the catalogue Lawrence Alloway wrote 'For a start, it would be realistic to replace the ideal picture of collaboration (derived from a story fiction of the middle ages) by a notion of antagonistic co-operation.'

At this conference on the same subject the 'rosy fiction' mediated through the writings of Morris and Ruskin was continually invoked. No one was ashamed to state the obvious: for example Joseph Rykwert read a Renaissance contract for an altarpiece and pointed out that a contemporary artist would be unlikely to sign such a document. The horrors of industrialization, described in *News from Nowhere* and *The Nature of Gothic*, were passionately reaffirmed by Leon Krier.

In a seminar on 'Structure and Decoration' Krier's disenchantment with modernism in painting and sculpture as well as architecture was reiterated. It was odd to hear Gavin Stamp describe one of Epstein's finest statues for the former BMA building in the Strand as 'obscene'. Like Krier, Stamp felt that artists should give up what used to be called 'the brave days of the 1960s' 'ambitious modernism', and set about creating craftsmanship, work employing a kind of public language.

Several speakers showed slides to illustrate the form this language

might take. Charles Jencks gave us the Parthenon, the west portal at Chertsey and Thomas Tresham's lodge, as well as classics of post-modernism like Venturi's Football Hall of Fame. The sculptor John Maine's slides of stone walls and Japanese raked gardens revealed the power and economy of simple patterns and structures. Stamp's choices were nostalgically eclectic - Belcher's Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Albert Memorial, Schute's St Andrew's Chapel in Westminster Cathedral. His final choice, Jagger's Artillery Memorial, was of especial interest, for the memorials erected to the Great War dead were the last group of widely admired public sculptures.

That there were no successors to these monuments is surely of crucial interest and in fact only one speaker, Kenneth Frampton, examined why a public language of art has ceased to exist. Not a reactionary, he did not simply blame modernism but talked rather of a defused social climate unable to give a creative charge to artists. Art's retreat into the galleries was symptomatic of what he called the 'privatization' of our lives. The public realm had been destroyed by the mass media but Frampton suggested that land art, which is necessarily public, was the natural successor to the sculptural monument and could restore to us a sense of public space.

Oddly enough the best of the five artist/architect collaborations entitled *A New Partnership* seemed close to Frampton's vision. This was Paul Neagu and John Miller's 'A Sense of Absence', a mysterious and massive inscribed platform of York stone over which a plumb line was suspended. The other works in this exhibition were elegant and provisional, except for Anthony Caro's ma-

quette for a bridge linking two buildings in Los Angeles. This was really a Caro sculpture which resembled a bridge. The architect, Berton Myers, had to compromise by lowering the height of his building and this was clearly a source of some delight to Caro.

The discussions between practitioners and administrators revealed an eagerness to cooperate. The architects wanted to build less austere buildings, the artists appeared keen to come out of the galleries, the administrators anxious to educate the public, the patrons, in the shape of three property developers, timely willing to commission works of art. Fourteen conference resolutions were passed, the most important pressing for some sort of 'Percentage for Art' legislation. Michael Sandle alone seemed entirely dissatisfied. He did not want his sculpture to be demystified, for public consumption and he did not like Collo Amery's elegant summing up. In retrospect it seems odd that he had not been invited to speak as he is one of the few sculptors working today who actively aims to create public monuments perhaps it is not surprising that they are works of unrelieved despair.

The 1982 London Book Fair - the eleventh of its kind, the first for eighteen months and the largest ever - will take place at the Barbican Arts Centre on April 6, 7 and 8. The London Academic Book Fair will have over 500 exhibits including publishers, distributors, printers, learned societies, photo-agencies and photo libraries. The Publishers Association will be holding a seminar during the course of the fair. Further information is available from The Director, London Book Fair, 16 Penbridge Road, London W11.

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## Oxford University Press



## A small publishing house: the first year

By Michael Mason

At the time of the merger between the Virago Press and Chatto and Windus, the *Guardian* printed a feature on radical publishing. Only two presses were discussed apart from Virago itself: the Writers' and Readers' Cooperative, and the firm which I recently set up with three partners, Junction Books. No doubt we were lucky that the *Guardian* thought of us for their feature, but it was a pleasing token of recognition for everyone in the firm (which now has a staff of eight) that they did. We have made a small but unmistakable profit in our first full year of trading, which is another token of recognition, and in a more important quarter: the market-place. In the manner of all new enterprises we had always behaved as if such success would come our way. More privately, perhaps, we had been too sensible - too conscious of the difficulties of what we were undertaking - not to be slightly surprised that the consumers and the media have liked us as much as they do.

Our idea of a publishing firm has worked at a time when this is felt to be unusual, so it may be of interest if I describe what that idea amounts to. It would be misleading to suggest that our policy has not altered over the last eighteen months: some of the principles we now feel most confident to represent changes of tack, responses to unforeseen discoveries about the business of acquiring, preparing and selling good books. And our idea is not just a blueprint for the early success of a small publisher: many of its features did not proceed from commercial thinking, but from the feelings of those involved about what books, and what kind of enterprise, they wished to be associated with.

## Books as collectibles

By Robert Halsband

Los Angeles Antiquarian Book Fair

Somehow Los Angeles does not spring to mind as a setting for antiquarian books, yet for the fifteenth time the International Antiquarian Book Fair, sponsored by its American branch, convened there on February 18, 19, and 20. (These annual fairs in California alternate between San Francisco and Los Angeles.) "Rare Book Week in Los Angeles," proclaimed Mayor Tom Bradley, who as candidate for governor is rarin' to occupy the mansion in Sacramento. (One hopes he will continue to favour Rare Books even there; under Governor Reagan a treasury official once proposed that the University of California sell off its rare books because they were not being used frequently enough to justify their value as an investment.) At the Ambassador Hotel, an immense pink stucco pile set far back on Wil-

We are "small", but our financial dimensions (the subject of one of our earliest and necessarily most hard-headed decisions) could have been smaller. We picked our starting capital at £45,000, a sum made up of personal money and bank facilities. We are thought of as "radical", because we have published a book by David Leigh on secrecy, for example, and an important history of lesbianism. But the adjective only describes the political and social studies books on our list. Over half that list is composed of titles on history, popular science, literature and art history (there are of course political-radical approaches to these subjects, but we have not only sought books which adopt them). The radical tendency today of our political books reflects our own attitudes; it is also true today that people with leftward beliefs seem to be more keen than people on the right to acquire and study serious books bearing on the questions that matter to them - and "alternative" bookshops are often exceptionally responsible and reliable as business associates.

The diversity of the list as a whole also springs from the personalities in the firm. No one who joined us on the editorial side brought with them a particular specialization in publishing let alone a list of books in trade, but we were all alert people with a variety of interests, so a mixed list seemed appropriate and workable. We have, however, always applied a definite idea about the level of our books. From the start we have supposed that there is a market for non-fiction books that don't condescend to the reader, but which are also readily intelligible without a specialized academic background - even if their subject-matter does often form part of syllabuses, and even if their authors are academics.

All last good projects are starting

to come our way, unsought, at a reasonable rate. Hitherto almost all our titles have been discovered or commissioned: the result of a digging effort that would dismay the ordinary acquiring editor. Our single biggest difficulty in our early growth has been getting good books, despite what we judge to be our attractions for an author. We pay decent advances, and standard royalties. We publish fast (often in less than five months) - a founding principle in our policy that has become something of a compulsory performance as we race to fill empty slots in our calendar. But hypertroubled and niggardly firms with established reputations (however busy) exert their irrational fascination and authors often seem to put a surprisingly low valuation on efficiency and consideration.

In the early stages we overestimated the market. Our print runs have shortened by about thirty per cent (though, happily, we have reprinted a good proportion of our titles); our list has necessarily expanded (we published about twenty-five books last year) and our prices have had to rise slightly. To an extent we are in the little publisher's pasture of more titles and fewer books, but we regret the tendency, and, as any good press should, we want to reverse it. We are seeking, rather than receding from, books with bigger readerships and more sensible prices, such as reference books.

A very propitious development, which has enabled us to undo some of the bad effects of increased unit costs, is the new responsiveness towards quite highly-priced paperbacks in the British book business. Perceptibly, in the months since we started, libraries, bookshops, customers and library editors have changed in their response to the paperback book priced at around £2. Our standard plan for any book is now a split

edition; this we did not anticipate eighteen months ago. The change of attitude in the editorial office has perhaps been the most marked, and it has mattered to us a good deal. We have done well in terms of coverage in newspapers and periodicals, but tight schedules and current problems in the book-casting industry have often obliged us to deliver paperbacks to the literary editors. Obligingly, they have still reviewed them.

At the risk of losing that editorial goodwill I shall admit that we do little advertising in the press. We have our own publicity manager, but she spends more time getting our authors on radio than drafting advertising copy. Unfortunately for those selling advertising space, the publishing wisdom that even a bad review is worth more than an advertisement seems to be correct. Last year we published a book on Virginia Woolf which claimed that she was not mad, and one on Tolkien which claimed that he had imitated childhood reading such as *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Thirty-nine Steps*. These claims displeased many critics; they went at some length into the reasons for their displeasure and the books have prospered.

Small publicity budgets are not unusual for small publishers, but another aspect of our sales effort is certainly that we undertake all our British representation ourselves, employing the equivalent of two full-time reps to visit the 400 or so bookshops that regularly stock us, at four-monthly intervals. This is an instance of a policy that was not foreseen in our early plans. In fact, these plans were unspecific on the question of representation, but we were anxious about it. The thought that our acquiring, editing, designing and

publicity efforts for a book would be hamstrung at the last moment - at the bottom of a freelance rep's briefcase - was dispiriting. When the time came, we decided to control the important phase of our activities directly. We have achieved subscriptions from bookshops and wholesalers, and durable contacts with these outlets, which persuades us that this was the right move, though it was made at an early stage. Not only has the immediate cost been justified, but there has been an unexpected financial benefit: there are small publishers in Britain and America whose books require to be represented with the same scale and emphasis as our own, and we are already carrying the titles of several such firms into the shops with better results, we believe, than they would have achieved through the bigger organizations.

Claims to have proved the merits of a particular policy in book publishing are bound to be doubtful. Unlike most commercial enterprises, publishing yields a quite new object every few days or weeks - or at least sufficiently new that you can never properly experiment with variations on those aspects of it which result in fixed. Because the book you find in paper is a quite different text from the one you issue in hardback in the same month you cannot tell how touch their different achievements in the market are due to their format. But my impression from the experience of founding and shepherding the direction of a small publishing firm is that a successful book, of our variety, will chiefly be so because of virtue in its text. That is to say, lucid, knowledgeable and informative writing gets its reward.

## Among this week's contributors

ALAN BELL is the Librarian of Rhodes House, Oxford.

IAN BELL is the author of *The Dominican Republic*, 1981.

ANTHONY BURGESS's most recent novel is *Earthly Powers*, 1980.

JAMES CAMPBELL was the editor of the *New Edinburgh Review*, until 1981.

OWEN DUDLEY EDWARDS is Reader in History at the University of Edinburgh. His most recent book is *Burke and Hare*, 1980.

P. E. EASTERLING is a Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge.

ROGER GARPITT's most recent collection of poems, *The Broken Road* will be published shortly.

JOHN GAAG's edition of *The Collected Correspondence of J. M. W. Turner* appeared in 1980.

JASPER GRIFIN is Tutor in Classics at Balliol College, Oxford. His *Shobs* will be published this month.

ROBERT HALSBAND is Professor of English at the University of Illinois.

GEORGE HOBSON's *Beyond Socialist Realism: Fiction Since 'Ivan Denisovich'* was published in 1980.

JAMES HUNTER is the author of *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 1976.

GABRIEL JOSIPOVIC's most recent novel *The Air We Breathe* was published last year.

ALEXANDER KAZHANO is Professor at the Dumbarton Oaks Centre for Byzantine Studies, Harvard University.

BRUCE LINDMAN is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of St. Andrews. His books include *The Jacobite Rising in Britain*, 1980, and *Scotland 1746-1832*, 1981.

RUARI MCLAREN's books include *Victorian Publishers' Book-bindings in Cloth and Leather*, 1973.

RICHARD MAYNE's books include *The Europeans: Who Are We?*, 1972, and a translation of Jean Monnet's *Memoirs*, 1978.

VIVIAN MENCAR is Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His books include *Beckett Beckett*, 1977.

ROSALIND MITCHELLSON is Professor of Economic History at the University of Edinburgh.

JOHN MOLA's most recent collection of poems is *From the House Opposite*, 1980.

VIRGIL NAMOIANU teaches Comparative Literature at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC.

S. J. NEWMAN teaches English Literature at the University of Liverpool.

PAT ROGERS is the author of *The Augustan Vision*, 1974, and *Henry Fielding: A Biography*, 1979.

JOHN ROOSTER is a lecturer in Modern History at the University of Durham and editor of the journal *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*.

WILLIAM SCAMMELL's most recent collection of poems is *Yes and No*, 1979.

ROGER SCRUTON is the author of *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 1980, and *From Descartes to Wittgenstein: A Short History of Modern Philosophy*, 1981.

T. C. SMOUT is Professor of Scottish History at the University of St. Andrews.

MARTIN SWALES is Professor of German at University College London.

JULIAN SYMONS's books include *The Thibaults*, 1975, and the crime novel *Sweet Adelaide*, 1980.

HUGH THOMAS's books include *The Cuban Revolution*, 1977, and *An Unfinished History of the Air*, 1979.

M. J. TILLY is a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge.

ESMOND WRIGHT was MP for Glasgow (Pollock) from 1967 to 1970 and Principal of Swinton Conservative College from 1972 to 1978.

## to the editor

### 'The White Hotel'

Sir, - I have declared my indebtedness in *The White Hotel* to the eyewitness account of Babi Yar, both in the formal acknowledgments and in innumerable interviews. Indeed, as a consequence of increased interest in Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar*, where Dina Pronicheva's testimony appears, my American paperback publishers, Pocket Books, are re-issuing it, and quoting my novel in its advertisements. *The White Hotel* is a synthesis of different visions and different voices: it asks only for readers with a sensibility to respond to it as a unity, and on the whole it has been fortunate in finding such readers.

Since my account of Babi Yar (Part V) is three times the length of Dina Pronicheva's comparable account, and equally spare in style, it would seem obvious that something more than a superficial re-working (D. A. Kenrick, *Letters*, March 26) is taking place. This section is where my heroine, Lisa Erdman, changes from being Lisa an individual to Lisa in history - an anonymous victim. It is this transition, reflected in style as well as content, which has moved and disturbed many readers. From individual self-expression she moves to the common fate. From the infinitely varied world of narrative fiction we move to a world in which fiction is not only severely constrained but irrelevant.

At the outset of Part V, the narrative voice is still largely authorial (though affected by Pronicheva's tone) because there is still room for fiction. Lisa is still a person. But gradually her individuality is taken from her on that road to the ravine; and gradually the only appropriate voice becomes that voice which is like a recording camera: the voice of one who was there. It would have been perfectly easy for me to have avoided the possibility of such attacks as Kenrick's, through some spurious "imaginative re-creation"; but it would have been wrong. The witness testimony was the truthful voice of the narrative at that point: "It started to get dark", etc. This is how it was - for all the victims. It could not be altered. The time for imagination was before; and, in my novel, after. Imagination, at the point quoted by Kenrick, is exhausted in the effort to take in the unimaginable which happened.

Like Mr Kenrick, I wish the *Babi Yar* acknowledgment was as prominent in the Penguin edition as it is in the Gollancz hardback; but I also wish that his version was more inclusive and comprehensive, able to see the novel as a whole. Like any serious novel, *The White Hotel* is far living in completely, or not at all.

D. M. THOMAS.  
10 Greyfriars Avenue, Hereford.

Sir, - Your correspondent D. A. Kenrick (*Letters*, March 26), fails to mention two important points in his attack on D. M. Thomas. First, the copyright page acknowledgment specifically mentions the testimony of Dina Pronicheva as being taken from pp 220-2 of the Penguin edition, the author of *The White Hotel* makes his procedure plain:

Dina survived to be the only witness, the sole authority for what Lisa saw and felt. Yet it had happened thirty thousand times; always in the same way and always different. Nor can the living ever speak for the dead.

Thomas, in other words, brings his heroine to die at Babi Yar. He is faced with the problem of describing the historical event for which there is only one witness. He uses the words of the historian, and half-French, half-French in origin, Patrucci made his home in Brussels and he should be remembered for his penetrating study *La Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art d'Extrême-Orient* (1910).

This Chinese work, originally published in 1679-1701, appeared in a

page because that is what such pages are for.

D. M. Thomas also gives a detailed note on his indebtedness to Freud. This is not a matter of copyright. Without Freud's work, Thomas's whole artistic and intellectual approach would have been impossible. *The White Hotel* could not have been written. On the other hand, there were other massacres beside Babi Yar. The debt to Freud is fundamental. The debt to Kuznetsov's unique witness is contingent. Both are acknowledged as they should be.

JAMES FENTON.  
1 Barlemas Road, Oxford.

The wider theoretical issues raised by this correspondence will be the subject of a symposium in next week's TLS. Contributors will include Harold Bloom, Lord Goodman, Ian McEwan, John Sutherland and J. O. Urmann.

### Von Moltke

Sir, - In Geoffrey Modan's *Note Books*, recently published, the author records the story (p 90) that Field-Marshal von Moltke only laughed twice in his life, and that one of the times was on hearing of the death of his mother-in-law. George Lyttonell quoted the same story in a letter to Rupert Hart-Davis, including it in a list of "howlers" compiled by Dean Inge, while adding "not a howler". Clearly both writers are drawing on a common source and we would be most grateful to any of your readers who can help us to identify that source.

For, with all respect to Lyttonell, it must be a "howler". The Field-Marshal's mother-in-law, Ernestine Burt (née von Staffeldt), died in 1831. There is no evidence that he knew her family before 1832. Even in that year he is unlikely to have thought of her as a mother-in-law because his future bride, Marie Burt, was only six!

It is true that Marie's father, John Heyliger Burt, married again in 1834, but it is equally unlikely that the Field-Marshal would have laughed on hearing in 1833 (when he was eighty-three) of the death of his stepmother-in-law. For she was also his own sister of whom he was so fond that he had her buried in the family chapel at Kreisau, Silesia, next to the space reserved for himself.

The Field-Marshal was renowned in his family for his silence. But there is no similar tradition about his inability to laugh, although one reason why, at the age of forty-two, he chose as wife a vivacious girl of sixteen was his desire to live a more social life.

John Heyliger Burt, though living in Germany, was an Englishman who owned property in the West Indies and Colton House in Staffordshire. Marie had in consequence English nationality and in her youth wrote English more easily than German. But there is no evidence that she was ever in England.

MICHAEL BALFOUR,  
JULIAN FRISBY,  
Waine's Cottage, Swan Lane, Burford OX8 4SH.

### 'Japonisme'

Sir, - Hugh Honour in his review of Siegfried Wichmann's *Japonisme* (March 19) is mistaken in writing that the word *japonisme* in any European language of the *Painting Manual* of the *Maistre de la Cour* was available until 1956. In fact, a French translation by the learned and sensitive writer, Raphael Petrucci, was published posthumously a year after his premature death in 1917.

Although half-Italian and half-French in origin, Petrucci made his home in Brussels and he should be remembered for his penetrating study *La Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art d'Extrême-Orient* (1910). This Chinese work, originally published in 1679-1701, appeared in a

Japanese edition in 1780 and was widely influential among the Nanga artists. Their art was reproduced in colour woodcut books, many of which were to be seen in the second half of the nineteenth century.

BASIL GRAY,  
Dawblers House, Long Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4QQ.

### 'The Berlin Secession'

Sir, - In his flattering review (March 19), S. S. Prawer regrets the small number of illustrations in the book *The Berlin Secession*. Your readers may like to know that the German edition (*Die Berliner Secession*, Severin and Siedler, Berlin, 1981) contains some 150 black-and-white illustrations, and that a revised second German edition with forty-eight colour plates is in the press. A catalogue with over 200 plates of the exhibition of secessionist works, which Dr Maria-Luise v. Grabow and I organized last summer, is still available from the Neue Berliner Kunstverein, West Berlin.

May I add a comment on S. S. Prawer's criticism of my translation of two verses from *Simplex Simus*? It is precisely because I translated the poem so freely, in the probably vain hope of making it sound like verse, that I included the original German in a footnote.

PETER PARET,  
Department of History, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305.

### John Ruskin

Sir, - Rachel Trickett in her review of *New Approaches to Ruskin* (March 12) expresses surprise at the importance of Arthur Helps's influence on Ruskin. Sir Arthur Helps (not Phelps as the review has it) was in his official capacity Clerk to the Privy Council from 1860 and later Private Secretary to Queen Victoria. He advised the Queen on literary matters, he arranged her meeting with Dickens and edited the *Journal of our Life in the Highlands* for her. He was also one of the nine literary figures to whom George Eliot asked her publisher to send series of *Clarendon Life* when it first appeared in the winter of 1857. Not as "obscure" a figure as Rachel Trickett implies.

ANN THORNTON,  
15 Cheniston Gardens, London W8.

### Andrew Marvell

Sir, - John Lehmman (*Letters*, March 5) adduces the frontispiece in his copy of the first edition of *Miscellaneous Poems* as evidence that Andrew Marvell wrote his hair long. So he does in the frontispiece of my copy of Curll's edition of *The Works of 1726* - but I had always taken it to be a wig.

JOHN RAYNER,  
Garlick Club, London WC2E 9AY.

### 'transition'

Sir, - May I thank Petr Skrabanek (*Letters*, March 5) for having written the letter I intended to write to correct an earlier correspondent's misstatement concerning *transition* and the surrealists?

Eugene Jolas recognized very early that this movement, its dramas and its experiments notwithstanding, had attracted the most talented young French writers of the time. It would have been remiss indeed on his part, if as editor of a magazine devoted to contemporary experimental writing and the accompanying plastic arts, he had neglected to give this group, as well as "Work in Progress", full exposure. He regretted that their iconoclastic action left the individual work untouched, unlike the slightly older Léon-Paul Fargue, whose

neoclassic inventions he appreciated. But Fargue was an absolutely free spirit. He was also one of Jolas's favourite companions.

Except for Philippe Soupault, who was an early friend of Jolas, but also one of the first surrealists to be solemnly excluded from the group (there were others), there was no contact between Jolas and André Breton's movement other than the pages of *transition*.

It would be my guess today that most of the writers who accepted Breton's strict intellectual discipline, however briefly, did not live to regret it but, on the contrary, counted their gains. I myself take pride in the fact that as early as 1927, *transition* introduced these gifted French writers to the English-speaking public.

MARIA JOLAS,  
106 bis Rue de Rennes, 75006 Paris.

### The Spanish Armada

Sir, - I refer to the review by David Quinn of David Howarth's *The Voyage of the Armada* (December 18, 1981).

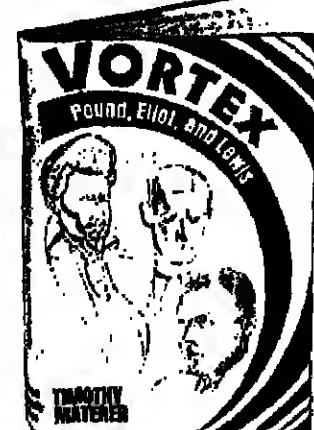
Could either of these gentlemen explain why English historians of the Armada, when reporting its eventual fate, take so little interest in the traditions which indicate that several ships eventually reached the Norwegian coast? The Danish-Norwegian government of the time received - and believed - information that some seven or eight Armada vessels had either called or been stranded at various places in Norway, and the local folklore seems to give some support for this. My impression is that English historians are vaguely aware of these tales but perhaps ignore them as too tenuous or unprovable to be worth bothering with. And I agree that in many cases that seems the only possible response. Yet the folk-memories of people in very remote places are not always to be dismissed: only a few years ago, for example, documents were found which confirmed the recollections of two remote Norwegian farming communities of previously unrecorded events in the late seventeenth century.

The really impressive Norwegian tradition is that which relates to the loss of large Armada ships off the island of Runde (Runde) some 145 miles north of Bergen. The local population have always called this ship the *Invincible Castle*; the *Invincible Armada* had no vessel of that name, but it did contain one "castle" ship: the *Castillo Negro*. What is especially interesting in this connection is that the islanders can be shown to have been using the name *Invincible Castle* - surely a neutral condition of the name of fleet and ship - decades before the publication (1884) of Dux's book *The Invincible Armada*, which is normally credited with having first established this as the generally accepted name outside Spain for King Philip's force.

To a lay eye - do the specialists perhaps have better information? - it does seem as if the *Castillo Negro* could well have ended up in Norwegian waters. She was the largest of the "hulks" (barks, *iracas*) which formed the core of the Spanish fleet as it moved up Channel, and was last recorded, together with the *Trinidad*, Valencera, picking up survivors from the *Bark of Hamburg* north of Ireland. All three ships had been too battered, clearly, to keep up with the main Spanish fleet; but the *Castillo Negro* was in better condition than the leaking *Trinidad*, which left her to try to reach the Irish coast: in practice what this seems to have meant is that the *Castillo Negro* could stay at sea, but do little more than run with the wind. Her squadron flagship, the *Gran Grifon*, was in the same sea-area at the same time, and in the same condition, and later hit Fair Isle while being blown helplessly towards Norway. If there is no evidence to the contrary it seems a

## CORNELL

In the hopeful years immediately preceding World War I, three young writers formed a loose but vital artistic alliance. These "Men of 1914" - Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis - and their close friends James Joyce and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska would generate much of the intellectual energy of the twentieth century. They longed for the unbridled flux of brilliant poetry, novels, paintings, and sculptures to take the form of a vortex - an explosive convergence of sensual beauty, order, and force.



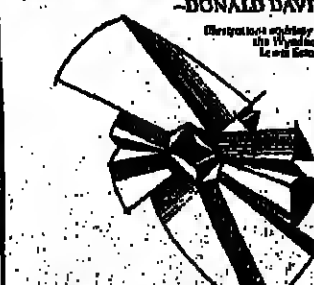
"A brilliantly comprehensive study of all aspects of Vorticism... illustrations of key works." - Lincoln Kirstein, *The New York Review of Books*

"Most valuable for those who prefer solid literary history to theoretical projections... it is dotted with judiciously selected quotations and the of information that cast light on the esoteric relations among Lewis, Pound, and Eliot. The interchanges between the 'men of 1914' have often been studied, but never quite in this way, which usefully integrates poetic ideas, happenings to the visual arts, and biographical background into the study of poetry." - Modern Philology

"Timothy Matterer's combination of historical and critical insights... makes this a truly valuable work. While he clarifies the studied philosophizing of Pound and Lewis, he manages to leave them intact. This is for from any. To handle these authors as once fairly and so firmly - as Matherer does - is a triumph." - ARTHUR MIZNER

"Matherer has done an excellent job of tracing the complicated relationship of Pound, Eliot, and Lewis, and of demonstrating the significance of all three of Vorticism and the 'Brightest Hope'. He shows convincingly how the three poets were influenced by their common concern with craft, tradition, and social responsibility and at the same time divided by their differing attitudes towards public, political and political problems. He expertly analyzes the parts played by Gaudier-Brzeska and James Joyce in the lives of the three poets and demonstrates the crucial importance of World War I. His detailed knowledge of the art of both Gaudier-Brzeska and Lewis is impressive for his to clarify the role of Vorticism in bridging the gap between the visual and the verbal arts." - DONALD GALLUP

"Vortex challenges comparison with Hugh Kenner's masterly book, *The Pound Era*, and astoundingly it surpasses the subcategory. By moving nearer to center-stage the paintings of Wyndham Lewis and the sculptures of Gaudier-Brzeska, Timothy Matterer puts in a new light the work associated with these great artists - Eliot, Pound, and Joyce. In particular, the comparisons between art and politics here seldom been handled with such firmness." - DONALD DAVIS



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pleasure. London for him was obviously what Paris and Berlin were for others in the same period. "Comme je regrette Londres et les phisirs inquisiteurs et l'incompréhensible Windmill!" On another occasion, he writes Marks will fix him up with some female company. "Préparez-moi mon vieux un cul bien anglais pour ce séjour que je puisse m'inspirer intimement des choses loentes. Je veux enlever le printemps!" In another remarkable letter he tells Marks he is bringing a delectable dancer to London (and Karen Jensen, the Danish dancer to whom he dedicated the first edition of *L'Égale*) and seeks his assistance in finding her a suitable companion who knows the London nightlife:

A ce propos il faudra prévenir P. que j'ai besoin d'un véritable gentleman pour la nuit de cette ravissante personne. Lui-même s'il est libre et le désire. Vous savez que ma vie nocturne n'est pas celle d'un gentleman et on me rendra grand service si on montre les beaux endroits anglais à cette admirable compagnie. Je crois d'ailleurs que le guide ne s'embranchera pas du tout. — Toujours un peu maigre par mes tandances. J'aime à rendre service.

Women are frankly objects of pleasure for him: "Je ris des choses du cœur. C'est que je suis vieux et coquin." A woman is either maternal or a whore: "Ce n'est jamais une honnête femme au sens où nous l'entendons. La culture et la religion ont créé une femme entièrement théorique." He takes a particular delight in foreign girls — Polish, Danish, American and Chinese. As he says on one occasion, his house is always open to timid sheep ("brebis

peureuses"). While they were not common property there is more than a hint that these women were on occasion passed round an intimate circle of friends. Céline also tells Marks to set his women to work — that's precisely what they want and they will thus be made happy.

Céline's favourite view of himself seems to have been as *maquereau* — "Un maquereau vaut cinq enfants. Il faut choisir. Trente ans bientôt d'expérience génitale me donne trente mille fois raison" and he exhorts Marks to transform his house in Dorset Square into a brothel. In what is probably the most revealing of all these letters he says: "Quand on est jeune et intellectuel on rougit d'être maquereau, quand on est vieux et intellectuel on rougit de ne pas l'être. On a compris. Vous n'avez pas encore compris, petit lapin — Ça viendra... Le maquereau est un fils un peu méchant et paresseux, donc adorable. Quand serez-vous donc adorable vieux lapin?" It is a pity we do not have Marks's reply.

The letters to Marks thus provide an intimate picture of Céline in the 1930s, one that is so far unparalleled, even by the letters quoted by Henri Mahé. Not all will approve of his attitude towards women, but his correspondence reveals what is in many respects an attractive personality. A zest for pleasure is expressed boisterously by a showman who enjoys playing a role. Any idea we may have had of Céline's misanthropy is dispelled by the affection he obviously felt for Marks. Other letters in the collection show his concern to promote the interests of such close friends as the painter Gen-Paul and the pianist Lucienne Delforge. For Céline scholars perhaps their greatest interest is the opportunity they

afford of comparing the author's attitude towards women with that of Barthes in *Voyage*. There are obvious points of contact but there is a light-heartedness here which is lacking in even the more humorous moments of the novel.

Marks was also the editor of the short-lived magazine, *Night and Day*. This British attempt to imitate the *New Yorker* lasted from July to December 1937. The Céline-Marks correspondence shows that Marks kept Céline abreast of the project. An examination of the issue dated December 9 reveals two items of interest. The section "Literary Snacks" contains a short, unsigned but appreciative review (undoubtedly by Marks himself) of *Mea Culpa* and *The Life of Samuel Beckett*. The pamphlet is described as a "tub-thumping tour de force" and the medical thesis "an impressive important work which anyone interested in these topics [life and death] should read". The inside cover of the same issue contains a number of unsolicited comments on *Night and Day* received from readers. Alongside Anon from Manchester and various other Englishmen designated by their initials we find one L.F.C. from Paris writing: "Le N. and D. nous semble joliment réussi. Nous sommes surtout en extase devant votre splendide dessinateur [Topolski]. Impression impeccable. Travail hors ligne! Et l'humour! Un triomphe, je dirais." Nor did Céline forget the magazine. At one point in *Guignolo* Bond, he writes: "— devant le 'Lyons' le plus grand de jour et de nuit que ça se passe!" and then adds the words "Night and Day". The significance of the English words, which undoubtedly recall the popular song, is clearly not fully grasped without an awareness of Céline's friendship with the young John Marks.



Céline as Rip Van Winkle: a self-portrait drawn during the writer's imprisonment in Denmark in 1945-6. His appearance, apart from bald and chad, are (l to r): his favourite cat Bébert, a nostalgic vision of the Moulin de la Galette and a dog called Betty. The drawing was first published in Céline, Cohiers de l'Herne, 1963.

## Sceptically mystical

By Graham Dunstan Martin

ROBERT GREER COHN: *Mallarmé*. Ighite 189pp. University of California Press. £17.25. 0 520 04188 7

LEO BERSANI: *The Death of Stéphane Mallarmé*. 100pp. Cambridge University Press. £9.95. 0 521 23863 3

Robert Greer Cohn attacks one of the most problematic of Mallarmé's texts, *Ighite*. Cohn doesn't say this, but I suspect that one of its difficulties is the struggle of the *ritornello* (the title "Therefore") with the problem of consciousness; and that this is why it is a dark, negative though still fascinating work. Cohn has already published an illuminating account of *Ighite* as an appendix to his *Œuvre de Mallarmé: Un Coup de Dés* (1951), and the present book would be even clearer had it also contained that earlier essay. Nonetheless, it is indispensable, enriching the text and giving us further insights into Cohn's concept of "heterogeneity".

This is best illustrated by the critic himself. "Take any classic philosophical proposition, such as 'man is free'. From the viewpoint of ordinary paradox, that proposition is both true and false. But from the viewpoint of Mallarmé's poetry is one of the few that treat the relationship between words and reality with due falsity." Perhaps, then, Mallarmé's struggle in *Ighite* to imagine paradoxically the joining of consciousness with the All, is itself a paradoxical imagining; a fact which Mallarmé himself knew well.

If every paradox entails its own contradiction, then one should not evade the deliberate contradictions in Mallarmé's own thought. Leo Bersani's intriguing new book provides us with a series of such contradictions. (1) The poet's expressed longing for a language which would "révéler le défaut des langues" (10, establish a language whose words no longer bore an arbitrary relationship to reality) is seen as contradicting his belief

that "language can produce only fictions". (2) The poet's desire to eliminate all contingency, replacing it with pure subjectivity, results in a sense of the abolition of the self and its replacement by images of the outside world. Similarly and by an opposite irony, the poet's seeking for objectivity results in an original and unique poetic diction. (3) The poet deprecates "occasional" writing and publishes only as a self-protective gesture that enables him to pursue literature, privately and secretly, elsewhere; yet he takes such care over his "occasional" writings that they acquire an air of supreme value. (4) There is tension in his work between the difficultly seen both as the precious secret which must be inaccessible to the profane and the seriousness of meaning which precludes any one privileged reading. (5) Whereas Mallarmé suggests that the universe exists to be "explained", summarized, concluded in the "Book", his work continually insists on the impossibility of such definitive statements. (6) His great intellectual irony contradicts his equally great sensuality. He is drawn towards the world he seems to reject. (Valéry said that Mallarmé was, of all the poets, the one who knew the one who he seemed most at home in the world. And Mallarmé wrote: "La Nature a lieu. On n'y ajoute pas.")

All this might make Mallarmé seem to be an *écrivain*, in the original sense of that perfectly evasive person who will never commit himself to an attitude. But surely Bersani has put his finger here on an intrinsic feature of Mallarmé's thought. The fact is that Mallarmé's poetry is one of the few that treat the relationship between words and reality with due falsity. Perhaps, then, Mallarmé's struggle in *Ighite* to imagine paradoxically the joining of consciousness with the All, is itself a paradoxical imagining; a fact which Mallarmé himself knew well.

As pieces of writing, Cohn's book has an engagingly personal tone as always. Bersani's suffers from a muddiness of language which, nonetheless, repays the trouble of expounding on it. There are some interesting misprints in Cohn: the French text suffers from such errors as "writing of 'en' for 'et'" (p. 128). But both books are essential reading for Mallarmé's admirers.

## Enlarging the oligarchy

By Owen Dudley Edwards

GEORGE ROSIE (Editor) *Hugh Miller, Outrage and Order: A Biography and Selected Writings*. 233pp. Edinburgh: Mainstream. £10.95. 0 906391 17 2

Hugh Miller, stonemason, geologist, journalist, prophet, controversialist, Scotsman and suicide, was a man who believed in using his words with force, so let us begin by giving a hearty welcome to the book and to its publishers for the impetuosity of the sub-title. A great service has been done in rescuing Miller's journalism from the past, not only for its principles but for its raw social history as well. Only extracts from his major works have been included here, but we can hope that they will arouse further stages of revival. *First Impressions of England and its People* (1847) particularly merits republication. Unlike the Americans, the English seem to find anatomization by foreigners a social sin, but they do read it, as the popularity in their day of G. J. Renier's *The English: Are They Human?* and A. G. Macdonnell's *England, their England* bear witness. Miller is not Tocqueville, but he is himself, which in the context is quite good enough, and this profound and trenchant discovery of England by a Scotsman has powers of inspiration to the student of present-day England as well as to the historian.

As to Hugh Miller, *Outrage and Order: A Biography and Selected Writings* the sub-title, shorn of punctuation as it is on the title-page, may

give the impulse buyer the idea that he is facing George Rosie's biography of Miller accompanied by other of Rosie's own writings. What the book in fact is, is a carefully edited assembly of Miller's representative pieces, prefaced by a valuable biographical essay. Rosie gives a little too much currency to the myth of the Scottish "democratic intellect", but if exaggerated, the myth is on the right side of the divide between truth and fiction. Miller and his Scottish counterparts assumed a far larger audience for their writings than their elitist counterparts in London: it was an oligarchy rather than democratic intellect to which they addressed themselves, but that oligarchy was a large one and intended by their activities to be made much larger.

What is clearly intended by Miller's present avatars is that Scotland should contemplate the real cultural riches of its past instead of confining itself to comforting mythology, whether perpetrated by the Kailyard or by Hugh Trevor-Roper. Rosie is readable and courtly, but he bares the occasional fang, notably towards that author of a National Trust Pamphlet of 1966 who lamented Miller's "bitterness and lack of moderation which makes much of his writing distasteful to today's reader". At which Rosie snarls "Maybel" (a phrase much beloved in similar contexts by Hugh MacDiarmid) and then some nice demolition work is on the way, preface to a too as well as in content Miller's texts on Highland Clearances, aristocratic anti-intellectualism, infant chimney-sweeps and the geographical lunacies perpetrated by the Court of Session in its desperate anxiety to find for property interests. On Miller's geological expertise and its relationship to his radicalism, both biography and texts are fasci-

nating, and a great lesson to modern activists in the politics of the environment, who will find what forerunners their movements have in the middle predecessors their movements have. Miller had prejudices aplenty, but as a self-taught examiner of country and personal knowledge. Above all else, his writing is a tirade against ignorance, and an insistence on taking all means for its removal.

The anthology readily concedes that over questions like the extension of the franchise and in labour organization Miller was decidedly conservative. Rosie even terms his politics "a species of eighteenth century Whiggism", which is a bit harsh; they are roughly the same as those of that other voluble nineteenth-century educationist of Scottish antecedents, T. B. Macaulay, and probably quite consciously so. Rosie is rather more happy about the vellement of Miller's Anti-Catholicism, and only prints the briefest of extracts on this theme with which Miller was slightly obsessed. This is unnecessarily delicate. Apart from the fact that I, and I think most other members of the detested Church, would have thoroughly enjoyed having more of his brickbats thrown in its direction, it would have helped to a further dimension to his thought. Miller was not merely a rant: like his admirer Carlyle he liked to appeal to intellect and emotion in the same roaring breath. It is fascinating to see him discover in Dublin labour organization in the early 1830s the forerunner of horrors ahead when labour activism had gathered strength. James Connolly could hardly have objected to such a citation.

On the other hand, if Rosie allows us only a little anti-Catholic vinegar, he overdoes it in the other direction by claiming Miller as "a fierce Pres-

considering the Faeds collatively aie demonstrates the range and variety of their work and therefore also helps rescue them, critically, from the limited artistic stereotypes that have too often been used to characterize them. The large-scale narrative paintings on Scottish themes for which they are best remembered, John Faed's "The Wapscrow" and Thomas Faed's "The Last of the Clan" — are discussed sympathetically; as also are Thomas Faed's once famous studies of the poor like "A Lowland Lassie" and "The Mitherless Bairn". But the defensive tones sometimes adopted by Mary McKerrrow to discussing these paintings is understandable, perhaps even desirable. They still carry with them too

much an air of belonging to a very particular place and time; their sentiment and narrative content remain obtrusive.

Yet there is much else to admire. The portraits by all three brothers (and by Susan Faed as well) are consistently impressive, while John Faed especially is represented here, in addition to the family genre paintings, by his superb illustrations of Robert Burns's poems, as obviously Vermeer-inspired portrait "The Young Duchess", a dreamy, romantic allegory; and, most notably, "Catherine Seaton and Roland Groom" which succeeds in capturing a depth of personality rare in Victorian paintings of women.

## MacDonalidicide

By James Hunter

MAGNUS LINKATER: *Massacre: The Story of Glencoe*. Photographs by Anthony Gascoigne. 159pp. Collins. £7.95. 0 00 435669 1

By twentieth-century standards it was a very modest piece of bucheury: thirty-eight dead; a few score survivors fleeing for their lives into the wintry hills. But 200 years after its occurrence the Massacre of Glencoe still provokes interest and argument, not least because of the brutal disregard of the traditional rites of Highland hospitality on the part of those soldiers who rose in the night and murdered their hosts, men, women and children. The Massacre of Glencoe is no isolated incident. Beyond the killing of the Glencoe MacDonalds lay Culloden, the Highland Clearances and the extinction of the Gaelic way of life.

The main merit of Magnus Linkater's retelling of the Glencoe tale, apart from its readability, is the surefooted way in which the author sets the Glencoe tragedy in the political

context of the time. This was no obscure tribal feud, though clan rivalries impinged upon it, particularly the long-running hostility between Campbell and MacDonald. The massacre, as Linkater makes clear, was a coolly reasoned act of state; a carefully considered gesture by Scottish Ministers seeking to protect William of Orange and the Protestant Succession from Papist and Jacobite plots and rebellions which invariably involved disaffected Highland clansfolk such as those who inhabited Glencoe. Highlanders killed Highlanders was nothing new. But in that more innocent age there was something genuinely shocking in the notion that a supposedly Christian government might order the "extrapolation" of an entire community. That was what made the happenings at Glencoe a *cause célèbre* then and later; that and the macabre romanticism which soon invested Glencoe itself with the air of a place made for dark deeds.

Magnus Linkater is good on Glencoe, its mountains, mist and moor. So is Anthony Gascoigne who took the photographs responsible for transforming this jolot production into that rare achievement, a picture book in which the illustrations add to the written word beside them.

## Wagering on chance

By Ian Bell

PATRICE DE LA TOUR DU PIN: *Une somme de poésies*. Tome 1, La jeu de l'homme ou l'ulmème. 607pp. Paris: Gallimard.

In twentieth-century French poetry Patrice de la Tour du Pin is a refreshing anomaly. Unlike most of his contemporaries, who came from bourgeois or working-class milieus, he was born (in 1913) into an aristocratic family of landowners, in the Sologne. The difference was not just one of class. With a few notable exceptions French poets of his generation lived and worked in an urban environment: The young Patrice grew up to the accompaniment of hunting-horns in the forested distance and the flutter of wildfowl in ponds and marshes. He was essentially country-bred, and his poetry reveals to an unusual degree an awareness of himself as an integral part of his own natural habitat.

Another contrast is his accessibility. Perhaps because he spent most of his life in the country and did not associate regularly with other poets, perhaps also for temperamental reasons, he never went through the Surrealist mill. His poetry is not esoteric. Not that it is always easy. His imagery is derived from his vast knowledge of the flora and fauna (and fungi) of his own countryside, and even French readers are likely to need a *Petit Larousse*. There are also passages where no dictionary can help, where he uses a vocabulary of his own invention. But the persevering reader will eventually master this personal language, and understand the message the poet seeks to convey.

In 1947 his first major work, also entitled *Une Somme de Poésies*, made its appearance. It included most of what he had published before 1939 and added a real deal more, welding them all into a single whole. In 1959 and 1963 he produced two more *Sommes*. The present volume, with its subtitle "Le jeu de l'homme ou l'ulmème", is a much revised version of the first. The form of the original work has been preserved, nine poems interspersed with eight "in-

terludes". The books are subdivided into sequences of poems, liturgies, short dramatic sketches and passages of straightforward prose. The interludes — mostly in dialogue but also in diary or epistolary form — serve the same purpose as the poems, in that they prevent the reader from falling apart. In other words, this is not a collection of poems to be dipped into at random. To be understood it has to be read to its proper sequence from beginning to end — all 600-odd pages of it. The question posed at the start of the last poem of all:

J'ai vaincu, mon histoire s'achève... Quel passager m'a suivi jusqu'au bout? suggests that the poet knows he is asking rather a lot.

How many readers have their patience rewarded depends on how many pick up the right wave-length. An essential preliminary is to grasp the precise meaning of the two key words in the title and subtitle. First, *somme*: not "sum" in its everyday sense but *summa* as in the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas. Second, *jeu*: not "game" and "play" only in the gambling sense. It is the idea of running through the book there is a long strand of charoed. The poet creates a world of his own devising, peopled, along with angels and animals, by men and women with strange names reminiscent of medieval romance and fairy-tales: Lorenquin, Ellor, Gorphonelet, Paulin, Lydverquin, Roscaire, and so on. There seems to be no symbolism in these names, though one or two convey echoes of the real world: Le Gorphonelet, who chooses a hermit's life on a lake island, is the name of a rare and very lethal fungus. Jacques Boragae, a wandering troupe of wandering players and might conceivably be identified with James Burdage. Another actor is Borlooge. He plays the part of a soldier, grooms about his uniform, looks disdainfully at the mask he has to wear, confessing as he puts it on:

Je me représente mal en héros... Ma première réaction devant le masque terrifiant de la guerre et toute l'horreur que je lui dans le regard est l'ennui, un prodigieux ennui.

Whether or not the anagram of "long bore" is intentional, Borlooge is the product of a frustrated military career in a tedious "phony" war.

All the characters represent facets of the complex personality of a poet who can only explain himself by playing God. His chosen vessel to begin with is Lorenquin, the founder and first administrator of "L'École de Tess", an institution for "thaïpoetical" study. There is, he explains, no symbolism in the name, which he chooses "arbitrairement pour le plaisir de le nommer" and it is to be "un lieu-temps de retraite au plus proche de celui où le mystère de Dieu touche le secret humain." Lorenquin's successor gives a precise definition of "jeu":

Mettoz-y peut-être la notion de "part", d'un part forcée et acceptée: sur le hasard? ... L'important pour nous est ce que nous faisons du hasard après chaque coup, puis ce qu'est la "l'interieur", que nous l'exposons, avec nous-mêmes, à Dieu.

This is the meaning of the subtitle becomes clear: man's stake in himself — a bet he can hardly expect to win. Tess is burnt down, and in the end all the characters, however tenderly and even affectionately depicted by the poet, are damned. After visiting them in Hell he returns to the surface with a canticle to praise of God.

The bet, however, is not money down the drain. For Patrice de la Tour du Pin his creation was an exercise in self-examination. The purpose of the first *Somme de Poésies* when it appeared thirty-five years ago and now to its refined and slimmed-down form, was and is to test and illustrate how far man could live creatively solely on his own intellectual resources. The second and third are eventually to be republished after revision and in their final form the three volumes of the trilogy will have as their respective central themes the stake of man in himself, as an individual, as a member of society and then presenting himself equivocally to God. The first volume contains some of the most evocative poetry and polished prose in all twentieth-century French literature. As the expression of a sensitive, thoughtful and questioning mind, it can be rated as an outstanding success. Its most fundamental achievement is as a demonstration of the Pascalian doctrine that the work of man without the participation of God are doomed to failure.

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# The end of the auld sang

By James Campbell

EDWIN MUIR:  
Uncollected Scottish Criticism  
Edited and introduced by Andrew Noble  
269pp. Vision/Barnes and Noble  
£14.95  
0 85478 324 5

After Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir is the most important figure in twentieth-century Scottish literature. Indeed, he is almost as valuable as MacDiarmid, since his scepticism was equal to the latter's tendency to inflate the achievements and prospects of the Scottish Renaissance. The two writers began as allies in the 1920s, their quarrel over the question of whether to write in English or Gaelic. MacDiarmid's synthetic dialect in which he had written two books of fine lyrics, soon developed into savage attacks on Muir by MacDiarmid, attacks which Muir's rationalism allowed him to accept calmly: MacDiarmid may have been an apparition of genius, but he was also an intolerant fanatic.

Muir accidentally claimed that his Orcadian birth disqualified him from being called a Scot. It was his way of trying to evade the disfigurements of Scottish history, which he felt painfully. Writing in *Scottish Journey* (1935) he described "A country which is becoming lost to history, gradually emptied of its population, its spirit, its wealth, art, intellect and innate character." This sorry state of affairs endangers more than just his career as a writer; his inner life was at stake; indeed the two were closely related. In a sense, all Muir's work – and certainly his poetry, which pays little heed to modernism – was devoted to restoring the "enriched" vision of things which he had experienced as a child in Orkney, in which thought, feeling and imagination are integrated and find expression. He believed that modern man can have little scope for such comprehensive needs – the less so in Scotland, a country "becoming lost to history".

In addition to his many books, Muir wrote hundreds of reviews and articles, and it is examples of these which Andrew Noble has chosen to make up his selection of Muir's Scottish criticism, to which he has added a long informative introduction. The problem with this is that Muir often repeated himself – for example, there are five pieces on Burns and the same opinions crop up in several of them. There are a few mistakes, such as the dating of MacDiarmid's poem *To Circumlocution* in 1923 instead of 1930. Some footnotes to the essays would have been useful – for example one to explain Muir's reference to Kafka as an Austrian writer. Furthermore, given that there are so many pieces by Muir (including some on Scottish subjects) other than those printed here, a list would have been helpful to the ones wishing to pursue an interest in this under-read critic.

For Muir was a critic of the highest quality. That he is rarely given credit for his brilliance is due as much to careless neglect as it is to the lack of cohesion in his oeuvre, a lack which is all the more surprising in a writer preoccupied with unity. In addition to his poetry, he wrote three novels (one of which has been reissued, and is reviewed on this page), several collections of essays, a study of the novel, a biography of Knox, an autobiography, a history of the Scottish novel, and other books such as *Scottish Journey*, which is a combination of history, travel, criticism and autobiography, and allows his great intelligence a wide range.

The pieces brought together here cannot be said to constitute a coherent critique of Scottish literature, but they are none the less worth collecting, since they bear the stamp of Muir's maturity, and all are

part of his effort to strip Scottish literature of its historical corruptions and its chauvinistic pretensions and to judge it in relation to a proper standard. The best pieces are the longer ones: an assessment of George Douglas Brown, author of *The House with the Green Shutters*, which Muir regarded as being superior to Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*; a fascinating comparison of Bolshievism and Calvinist modes of totalitarianism; the essay, "A Note on the Ballads", perhaps the best introduction there is; fine essays on Burns, Scott and Stevenson and a group of five terse pieces on aspects of the state of modern Scotland.

Muir's difficulties with Scottish literature stem from the split which must have been forming in the Scottish mind long before the Union of the Parliaments made it visible in 1707. The Union meant that educated Scots, who came from a distinct cultural tradition quite separate from the English one, were suddenly expected to show allegiance to English government and English models of civilization. (Many of course leapt at the chance; hence the appearance in the eighteenth century of little books designed to help remove "Scotticisms" from the vocabulary.) It deprived Scotland of a separate government, thus disabling Scottish affairs by removing the machinery which creates history and helps shape culture. The schism this produced survived into Muir's time, and continues to afflict Scottish culture today.

The basic difference between Muir and MacDiarmid was that one believed the fractures could be healed while the other did not. It was the

language problem which provided the bone of contention. The question is the same now as it was then: should Scottish writers write in the language they speak, in which they are educated and, after all, governed; or ought they to react against these conditions and write instead in Scots, which came naturally to Burns and may sound natural to the Scottish ear, but which is nowadays dead spoken? For MacDiarmid, Lallans was the only hope for a native Scottish literature, whereas Muir regarded its use as an anachronism: the "auld sang" was reaching an end. "Reduced to its simplest terms", he wrote in *Scott and Scotland* (1936), "Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another; their emotions run to the Scottish tongue with all its associations of Scottish sentiment, and their minds to a standard English which for them is almost hazy of associations other than those of the classroom." When this separation is complete, be went on, "emotion becomes irresponsible and thought arid".

Muir's difficulties with the three great writers which Scotland has produced since the Union – Burns, Scott and Stevenson (four if one includes MacDiarmid, although the difficulties Muir experienced with him are somewhat different) – all at same point involve the language question and each writer's attempts to settle it. Scott suffered most because his powers were greatest and his need to be both an English and a Scottish writer made him prone to the vice of gentility. It is the characters from the lower orders who speak Scots in his novels; Muir regarded this Scots as

being unsurpassed, but Scott debased his characters, their tongue, and finally his own achievement, by relegating them – "the only true children of his genius" – to a subordinate place in his novels. In his poetry he sacrificed the close fitting of words to things, which he must have known from his devotion to Scottish ballads, to cheap melodrama. At this point Muir's view of Scott coincides with his view of Stevenson. Until his last novel (he died while writing it), Stevenson's work paralleling his own bited him from steering his talent away from romances in which words must be unshredded every few pages. It was the effect of his incomplete reaction to the society he emerged from: a strictly religious one. In which secular literature was tolerated only as amusement. The result was that Stevenson's imagination was reduced to fancy, and his prose had to be falsely decorated to suit it. There is some dubious speculation about the theme of disinheritance in Stevenson's work paralleling his own "lost heritage of health", but the essay "Robert Louis Stevenson" answers those who wonder why he is not classed with the great novelists of the last century.

The essays on Burns are valuable chiefly for showing it is the poet's ordinariness which has made him part of the fabric of national life in a way that the English bard could never be. Of course, this popularity could only be a mixed blessing. In "Burns and Holy Willie", an excellent piece which reports on the unveiling by Ramsay MacDonald of a statue of the ploughman-poet, Muir demonstrates how the subversive Burns has been misappropriated by a

bourgeois audience which is willing to approve his morality, and share his accent, only on Burns Night.

Not surprisingly, Muir likes Burns best, and regards him as safer than most closely to the ballads. The ballads represent Muir's ideal in Scottish literature: a clear vision, in which the word is close to the thing, rendered with passion. Besides the ballad tradition, only poets of the medieval period were completely free from the major corrupting influences of Scottish history: the Reformation, the Union and the Industrial Revolution, whose various repressions were to make the continuation of an organic literary tradition in Scotland impossible.

Although Muir's value as a critic lies in his disinterestedness, his search for a relation between the brief story of man and the fable of mankind occasionally led him into romantic or irresponsible fantasies, such as that at the close of *Scottish Journey* in which, after a beautiful meditation on Scottish history, he allows himself to imagine a Scotland freed from the twin curses of depression and capitalism by an application of Major Douglas's theories of social credit. He was wrong in this, and his urge to escape the Scottish orphanage occasionally led him to other desperate opinions, such as that Scotland would one day soon be subsumed by England. But more than most he can be depended on for his toughness of mind. In a Scotland where this problem since the 1930s when Muir wrote much of this criticism, that is what is needed most.

## A trophy among the trams

By Alan Bold

EDWIN MUIR:  
Poor Tom  
254pp. Edinburgh: Paul Harris. 26.95.  
0 86228 023 0

In 1922, the year that produced *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* and saw the pseudonymously Hugh MacDiarmid leached from Scotland, Edwin Muir discovered he was a poet. He explains in *An Autobiography* (1954) it was a mystical experience that allowed him to reset the story of his life as a fable involving an Edenic childhood; a Fall into the industrial inferno of Glasgow where his

mother, father and two brothers died; and ultimately, a repossessed of Paradise. When the impulse that prompted his poetry flagged he turned out more pedestrian writing including three novels: the eutroically intense *The Majorance* (1927), the historical *The Three Brothers* (1931) and the autobiographical *Poor Tom* (1932).

Willie Muir, the poet's wife, revealed in *Belonging* (1968) that Muir wanted to preserve a considerable distance between his fiction and his poetry. His poems were to be glowing recreations of his childhood vision whereas the novels were to be objective accounts of imaginative experience. Muir, Willie recalled, wrote *Poor Tom* as a purely contemporary study of life in Glasgow, again using his own family experi-

ences, but again in this book, which contained much that was finely imagined and moving, he failed to attract a public. Now it is being reissued in Paul Harris's impressive Scottish Fiction Reprint Library, and comes complete with an informative introduction by Muir's biographer P. H. Butter who feels that "Muir's genius was not for novel-writing. Nevertheless his intelligence, sensitivity and vision makes this book far more interesting and moving than most novels."

The novel retells his fascination as a record of Muir's experience of Glasgow and an example of the way in which he attempted to fit the autobiographical facts to a peculiarly Scottish form of fiction. Robert Louis Stevenson and George Douglas Brown are the two major influences on the book. By dividing the narrative interest between two contrasted brothers Muir offers a crude version of the psychological duality so expertly explored by Stevenson: Tom, Menson drinks while Mansie Manson thinks, Tom acts while Mansie reacts. Tom longs for freedom while Mansie accepts the institutional aspect of Christianity and Socialism; Tom is an engineer while Mansie is an office worker. The theme of sibling rivalry has a sexual dimension, and the book opens on a tense situation as Tom watches Mansie walking out with his girl Helen. "By God, I'll get even with him!" he thought, but no expedient came to his mind, and his anger took another leap upwards.

Muir's secondary stylistic source persuades him to set in industrial Glasgow the narrow moral world that George Douglas Brown attained in *The House with the Green Shutters* (1903). Muir goes through the whole repertoire of effects that the self-consciously artistic Scottish novel: alcoholic escapism, domestic melodrama, the sense of being haunted by a defeatist past, the Gothic presence of an oppressive fate. Muir's own contribution to this predominantly realistic mode is to give symbolic significance to the events he describes. There is an obvious biblical symbolism in the theme of sibling rivalry, and also in Tom's predicament, for it is he who has the ability to betray, coveted with Glasgow be-

might have said that he was betrayed by a kiss. When the first part of the novel ends with Tom's moral collapse into "dirt and water in the street" this drunken fall from a tramcar is supposed to represent the fall of man. In Muir's prose, as in his poetry, Eden is only an image away and Tom, we have been told, remained outside his "private Eden".

Tom's long decline is, likewise, meant to represent the atrophy of the individual in an industrial environment. As Tom is reduced to an onlooker and Mensie shifts to a central position, Muir's difficulty is in making the movement of Mansie's mind a genuine focus of interest. In the beginning Mansie is unsympathetic. When a local girl provides his sexual initiation, his pragmatic nature rises to the surface and he is left with a "rovelation" which he has been transported among the working classes, who are about collarless and in their shirt-sleeves, and washed themselves down to the waist at the kitchen sink while the rest of the family sat at the table eating." Later he accepts his social inferiors as moral equals and through a "rovelation" which he has on May Day, undergoes a conversion to Socialism. Having a version of the interests of a working class man, he assumes a worldly wisdom he did not, at the time, actually possess. Or so the prose suggests. This is a typical example of the way he moves unconsciously from assertion to abstraction: "A sick man's infirmity may confine him to a pair of small rooms, but for the spatial freedom that he is denied, time, time in which he can do nothing at all if he chooses, richly recompenses him, translating itself into a new and more satisfying, because more amenable, dimension of space."

*Poor Tom* is an incidentally rewarding novel rather than an achieved work of art. For the student of Muir it is obligatory reading, for the general reader it is best regarded as a minor work by a major writer. It was Muir's velodromic performance as a novelist, and his prose was thereafter directed towards criticism, autobiography and translation. Clearly he knew what he was doing, but his own talents as a writer of prose.

\*The new edition of *Poor Tom* will be published on April 14.

# Improvements before the improvers

By T. C. Smout

ROBERT A. DODGSON:  
*Land and Society in Early Scotland*  
345pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £22.50.  
0 19 822660 8

MARGARET H. B. SANDERSON:  
*Scottish Rural Society in the 16th Century*  
286pp. Edinburgh: John Donald. £15.  
0 85976 027 8

The study of Scottish agrarian history has long attracted good scholars, yet the subject remains in a curiously unsatisfying state. Intellectually, awaiting the major interpretative strokes that will give it form. For the entire period from 1780 to 1900 and beyond – traditionally the great days of Scottish farming – it cries out for proper analysis, backed by quantification. For the period before 1780 – and certainly before 1700 – the extent and depth of study has depended mainly on a few articles, and a single book by Ian Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, though Alexander Fenton's *Scottish Country Life* and Frances Shaw's *The Northern and Western Islands of Scotland* are also useful contributions. Whyte's book, together with *Land and Society in Early Scotland* and *Scottish Rural Society in the 16th Century*, now make up the major corpus of writing on the Scottish economy in earlier centuries.

The old view was that Scottish farming was virtually a stagnant pond until it was cleared out by vigorous post-Union landowners. This was already under fire at the time when Whyte finally and conclusively demolished it. But what was to replace it? Were we to see Scottish history here as a reflection of English history, where the "Agricultural Revolution" of the eighteenth century had been dethroned to a relatively minor episode in a long-running story of constant change and response to the market, to industry and to domestic change that accelerated rather more clearly in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries than at other times? Whyte has both urged his readers to regard Scottish husbandry before the Union as something adaptable, vital and already on the move, and yet warned them not to be lulled by a Kent-type agricultural revolution had already taken place in the north. There is nothing necessarily self-contradictory in this, of course. He clearly showed that many things once regarded as characteristic of eighteenth-century improvers – like liming, giving extended leases, emarking, and consolidating holdings – had a significantly older history. But two problems remained unresolved. First, what were the limitations in yield achieved by these changes? Whyte produced a few figures, but the data have not yet yielded up the treasures promised by Overly and others for England. Second, how far were the changes illusory rather than real, produced by an improvement in a particular period, rather than by a real concentration of changes in husbandry in the seventeenth century? Would detailed study of earlier periods show that many of the practices had a still older history in Scotland?

Neither of these books properly attempts to answer the first of these problems: both imply at least partial answers to the second. And they cannot fail to be read with profit by those with a serious interest in the wider problem of how agrarian society in Britain as a whole has developed, for the contrast between Scotland and those parts of England, Wales and Ireland that have been studied in depth must be instructive. Robert Dodgson is ambitious, and takes the grand sweep – from his opening observation "that man has been in Britain for over 200,000 years, but in Scotland for only 7,000" – to his warning that the Highland clearances are comprehensible only in the light of developments that took place in the century before

1780. *Land and Society in Early Scotland* is both a masterly survey of the scattered printed work of earlier scholars (nineteenth-century and modern) and an original synthesis peppered with sharp observations of his own. Its scope makes it a difficult book to review – those who feel at home down on the seventeenth-century farm are not usually well qualified to criticize Dodgson's views on the Bronze Age, or adjudicate on the intricacies of medieval land measurement.

Nevertheless, there are certain themes that run like sinews through the book. One is the sense of continuity of institutional forms over long periods and between cultural watersheds. For instance, Dodgson follows Barrow and others in equating shire and thanage as a label for the multiple estate, to show how the latter concept was itself a Celtic survival apparently ubiquitous in Scotland and possibly extending backwards into the Iron Age – "a crucial thread of continuity from the prehistoric period through into the historic" – and a functional means of control and exploitation that "enabled the few to influence the many". If there is here a hint of historical materialism, the second sinew is the sense of the abiding harmony of the institutions of the early rural economy with the world about it. It was only primitive in the sense that its methods were unsophisticated and directed mainly to subsistence, not that they were stupid or ill-judged. The township of multiple tenants exploiting arable, muir, moss, mill and shieling, and keyed in to the feudal barony and baron court, was a subtle organism maximizing man's ability to survive and reproduce himself in a harsh environment. Incidentally, the degree to which the farmstead was a genuinely co-operative institution on the arable is still unresolved by Dodgson, by Sanderson and by Whyte. There is much evidence for town co-operation over herding and stocking, but surprisingly little evidence for it in respect to ploughing, sowing and reaping; running, and rearing like half an ox-gang, seem to imply co-operation in arable farming, but how and for how long it was so organized is very unclear.

A third theme in *Land and Society in Early Scotland* is the insistence that continuity and harmony are compatible with a dynamic of change: the township does not just emerge in the closing centuries of prehistory and then survive unaltered until the improvers sweep it away – it adapts, and the basic spur to adaptation seems to be demographic pressure. The expansion of the number of new settlements is one sign of this – the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were one period "of unquestionable colonizing activity", and there was another "late burst of settlement formation" in the late fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The splitting of existing settlements – giving the two new settlements names such as Baster and Wester, or Nether and Over – is another, more characteristic of the second period than of the first: this often involved the decentralization of an existing township, which might be left with a church and little else so that it could even be mistaken for a late medieval "deserted village" and taken for an indication of retracting, not expanding, cultivation.

The other and most significant change proposed by Dodgson is the innovation of outfield, not – as most earlier commentators had presumed – a timeless feature of pre-improving cultivation, but a new practice of the fifteenth century enabling land to be more effectively taken in from the waste. In traditional historiography, the outfield has been described as characteristic peasant bad practice, little more than an area of shifting cultivation on underfertilized land. Dodgson argues that it was always associated with folding stock on a defined area of temporary enclosure, and should be seen as more efficient use of scarce manure on marginal land. If he is right (and his evidence appears persuasive), the increased ability of the land and to support a larger population in the

seventeenth century becomes apparent – as, ton, perhaps, its increased susceptibility to famine, since such marginal land was presumably more vulnerable to failure in years of bad weather than was the remainder.

The last two chapters of *Land and Society in Early Scotland* are devoted to the period 1650-1760, the age immediately before basic changes altered the landscape and the rural economy out of recognition. This presents an immediate implicit comparison with Whyte's work, which can now be assessed more clearly in the longer perspective. Dodgson can find no evidence for a dramatic Kerridge-type revolution in Scotland before the eighteenth century, but he refers to "widespread changes in the nature of farming enterprise and in landholding, the roots of which lay in the seventeenth century", but which only produced fundamental alterations in economic structure late in the eighteenth century. These post-1650 changes appear to have included, in those places most in touch with a growing external market for grain and meat, an increase in the number of single-tenant farms, though he is careful to observe that there had "never been a time when the multiple tenancy was overwhelmingly predominant", and that even in the period, in places not so closely in touch with the market, the number of multiple tenants was growing, especially in the Highlands where the demon of congestion was already overt early in the eighteenth century.

He suggests that an agrarian bifurcation was taking place, with an efficient sector of single tenants (typified by the stock farms of the Borders) increasingly relying on external sales, and a subsistence sector with multiple tenancies providing little produce for the market but perhaps much potential labour for pursuits like spinning, knitting and fishing. Theoretically this is persuasive; exactly what were the concrete realities of these two sectors on the ground remains to be explored more fully.

As for changes in technique, Dodgson fails to discover anything for this later period as obviously important as the invention of outfield which he postulates for the fifteenth century: the use of lime may have increased, but this can clearly be pushed back into the sixteenth century, enclosure before the Union was still little more than an emarking round the great house. Of more value probably was the introduction, in some places, of four and five-course rotations using fallow and one lagumo crop, to replace the traditional oats-out-bear of the infield. He says "This was probably a major innovation of the period 1750-1760" which must surely be a misprint for "1650-1760", even so, the use of legumes and four-course rotations can be found earlier, and the exact impact of this change is hard to judge, without more yield figures.

Those who read this book from an informed background of English agricultural history will probably find it hard to escape the feeling that the eighteenth-century Scottish improver and English traveller were right to believe that Scottish agriculture was extraordinarily backward, in the sense that the general absence of "up-and-down-husbandry", sown grasses, roots, clover or extensive enclosure until after 1760 did mean that it was under-performing in relation to its potential and the known technology of the age. On the other hand, the reason for this is easy to see. If the market was weak and dung scarce till the great expansion of the cattle trade in the eighteenth century, the peasant's strategy was to survive at subsistence level as best he could – well enough, from his point of view.

Margaret Sanderson's *Scottish Rural Society in the 16th Century* is almost equally fascinating, but quite different: instead of the grand sweep, the single century; instead of the omnivorous curiosity, a concentration on problems of tenure – though not, it must be said, to the exclusion of the germane details of husbandry, perhaps one should) those of im-

provement. Much of this corroborates Dodgson, though it is strange and disappointing that not a word of what he wrote, Fenton or Shaw has written appears in her bibliography. She covers the regular nature of the consolidation of holdings even in her period, the early use of lime, peas and beans (though they are not in the index) and the intelligent nature of the peasant's strategy in farmstead and barony when faced with the problem of extracting a living from a harsh land. Her remarks on leases are worth pondering: between the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth century the commonest leases (at least on church lands) were for life or for nineteen years – and they were numerous. If Whyte found the granting of long leases to be one of the most significant signs of change in the seventeenth century, maybe the period of short leases, holding at will was a comparatively brief aberration.

The bomb Dr Sanderson wishes to throw into Scottish sixteenth-century history, however, concerns not the fate of the so-called "kindly tenants", and the nature of the disposal of church lands under the leasing system. The traditional view is that the kindly tenants of the fifteenth century, who had held their land for generations without formally establishing legal rights of heritable tenure, in the sixteenth century the kirk came to sell off its patrimony for a fixed quit-rent (feudal), losing security and perhaps the land itself to big secular landowners who moved in to buy the fees. Not so, she contends. The renters who enjoyed kindly tenure were closely analogous to English copyholders, and generally emerged from the fusing movement as independent owner-occupiers. About half the fears who can be traced were small men; most of the small men were already occupying the land when it was feued: it was continuity and greater security, not fracture and dispossession, that was the order of the day.

Immense learning and much research. For instance, she is able to establish beyond a shadow of doubt that very large numbers of renters, and some of them, were of their own lands, which is an extremely significant finding.

But how far can the argument be pushed? Can it be said not only that most known fears were renters, but also that most land passed into the hands of renters? There is a very large difference, especially bearing in mind that a few places passed into the hands of large numbers of very small tenants. A mere seven settlements (Tayport, Ontonstone, Eyemouth and Coldingham) were feued to about 250 small tenants, who thereby accounted for about a fifth of all known charters in Scotland granted to persons below the rank of laird. On the other hand, those above that line were often given extensive areas of land: "charterers to noblemen often contained a large number of territories, including whole baronies". The logic of this forces one to the conclusion (not, however, drawn by Sanderson) that much less than half the land went to the occupiers. But how much less?

The answer is not easy to find, but Table 3, headed "amounts of land granted to occupants", seems to be relevant: it contains a column called "percentage of grants to occupants", and the "grants" are defined as "units of land, great and small, mentioned in the body of the charters". Calculation from that column suggests that in the thirty-one areas the mean percentage of grants to occupants was 43.5 per cent. Now, 87 per cent of the occupants were "resident occupants" and 60 per cent of the residents known to have been below the "class of laird", of typical renters. It would seem, therefore, that renters probably got on these estates about 23 per cent of the land, leaving 77 per cent for the rest of society: if one disregards (as perhaps one should) those of im-

known status, then it looks as if the renters might have got 31 per cent and the rest of society 49 per cent.

This must be a rough calculation and the author could undoubtedly make a better one from the original data. If it is true that roughly three-quarters, or two-thirds, of the land surface was sold to those other than the working tenants, then it leaves intact Sanderson's main point, that large numbers of renters survived the feuing movement to become positioners and bonnet lairds, independent smallholders with security, perhaps especially (but certainly not exclusively) in the west, in Fife and in patches of the Eastern Borders. But for every renter who obtained this benefit there were two – or three – who did not. That would leave intact a main point of the older historiography, that the breakup of the kirk lands did indeed involve a massive transfer of power over the lands to lairds, nobles and others, who might well not hesitate to use the opportunity to threaten the security of the tenantry. Plenty of contemporaries thought this was happening. Dr Sanderson is not too keen on the use of literary evidence, but Dr Dodgson surveying the same period finds the satirical tracts of Sir David Lindsay and others "an instructive source" that "depict the Scottish peasant as racked and impoverished by both nobility and burgher alike". That still seems to be fair.

These two books between them solve many problems, and raise a good few more. They represent together a great step forward in our understanding of how Scottish rural society worked before the improvers, and it is much to be hoped that others will take up the research challenges that have been so vigorously made here by both authors.

The Tait Gallery in association with Edinburgh University Press has published *Turner and George: the Fourth in Edinburgh, 1822 to 1829* (Edinburgh, 1972) £15. 0 85224 432 0, which complements the exhibition and reproduces in facsimile the contents of J. M. W. Turner's two pencil sketches of drawings made at the state visit of the recently crowned king, Sir Walter Scott planned the ceremonies and costumes and adorned the Scottish capital. "A tartan fit had come upon the city," wrote Allan Cunningham. Turner recorded the events in one sketchbook and in the other planned a series of paintings of the "Royal Progress", although never executed, the sketches for them reveal much about Turner's art and working methods.

The National Library of Scotland has commissioned and acquired an example of the work of the contemporary craft bookbinder Arthur W. Currie, now Senior Lecturer in the Department of Print Media, Publishing and Communication at Napier College of Commerce and Technology, Edinburgh. In a copy of Paul Needham's *Twelve Centuries of Bookbinding 400-1600*, bound in morocco and tooled in geometrical designs inspired by Coptic work illustrated in the National Library Exhibition Room until April 23.

**SPRING BOOK AWARDS**

The Scottish Arts Council has awarded £800 to the author(s) of each of the following books:

- Angus Calder
- Revelationary Empire
- Jonathan Cape
- Francis Russell Hart & J. B. Pick
- Neil M. Gunn: A Highland Life
- Christina Lerner
- Enemies of God
- Chaito & Winick
- Michael Lynch
- Edinburgh and the Reformation
- John Donald
- Allan Macleay
- The Death of Man
- Bodley Head
- Christina Lerner
- A Childhood in Scotland
- John Murray
- Ken Morrice
- For Art I Know
- Abertree Press

Scottish Arts Council



# The Hanoverian side

By Rosalind Mitchison

W. A. SPECK:

The Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the '45  
230pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.50.  
0 631 10501 8

This is establishment history. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* one meaning offered for "establishment" is "a settled government by constitution", and such an institution is established only for so long as it remains "settled". Unsettling actions are to be seen as outrageous attacks on an approved status quo. By 1745 many could hold that the "revolutionary" settlement of 1689 and its continuation in the equally revolutionary Hanoverian succession had become established in public opinion and support as well as in fact. Any alternative was thus unthinkable. W. A. Speck, in his lively but one-sided, *The Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the '45* succumbs to this view. In the campaign between two royal princelings, the 25-year-old Stewart heir, Prince Charles Edward, and the younger son of the Hanoverian monarch, the 24-year-old William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, the word "royal" is carefully reserved for the Hanoverian army. Yet the Hanoverian title was the creation of Parliament, and the government of the day recognized Charles Edward as a prince. Some 30 years later his brother and heir was to receive a pension from the British government. Because Professor Speck has decided that "fact" is to be treated as "right" he goes no further than did William Augustus in understanding the basis and force of Jacobitism. There have been too many books on the '45 seen exclusively from the Jacobite side, but it does not truly redress the balance to answer these with one seen only from the Hanoverian side.

Establishment history is, by definition, a success story, and success stories lack the pathos and tragic dimension of heroic failure. In this story the tragedy pertains not to the unheroic failure of the Stewart youth, a conventional and not very intelligent young man who still possessed residual charm, but to the clan society which was finally broken up after the rising.

It is high time that Cumberland's personal achievement should be applauded. He was brought back from waging war on the continent, to carry through this campaign with energy and efficiency. He used his troops well, saw to their training and equipment, spoke to them with the right note of encouragement and cheer, rose early, as often as not at 4 am, and got through his business briskly. He infused his men with his own confidence, so that, on his birthday, the night before the battle, he could assure them "we have one march more" and be believed. He had chased the Highland army through England, and nearly caught it. When called upon later to pursue it into the Scottish Highlands he had the wisdom not to venture into the narrow valleys that penetrate the massif but to head up the coast. Meanwhile the Highlanders' march to Derby had produced unprecedented displays of loyalty to the regime. Loyal Associations sprang up all over England, and large sums were subscribed. Most of the money was for local defence, but some part of it went to "comforts", that is basic clothing for the army. Even that bizarre grouping of illegal capitalists, the smugglers of Sussex, formed themselves into an Association to support the government. They systematically defied Cumberland, by energy and competence, secured the throne of his family and welded to the dynasty a popular support that it had not previously had. Only one thing marred his achievement, the reputation he acquired for brutality in his treatment of the defeated rebels and their Highland bases. This aspect, indicated though not fully exposed here, gives the book its title.

Speck spends some time in showing that the brutality immediately after Culloden may have resulted from the forced Orders of the Day attributed to Lord George Murray, telling the Highland army to give no quarter. This "brutality" was grudgingly alluded to in

Cumberland's own Orders, but not so explicitly as to override the normal rules of war. The trouble was that the Highland army was not a foreign military force in Hanoverian eyes, but a group of rebellious citizens, and it was not clear where policing stopped and war began. Cumberland himself could hardly be expected to view the royal succession as an open political issue. The battle itself involved a dreadful level of slaughter and maiming in the Highland army. Neglect of the injured afterwards was not confined to the Jacobite troops, and brutality is an understandable reaction from the first men in a hundred years to stand up to and defeat a Highland charge. There was also pillage and violence wreaked on Highland communities during the ensuing months. This, though nowhere as severe as the effects of clan warfare in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, was resented by a population basically peaceful.

It is a pity that Speck does not spend more time on the Scottish aspect of his story. If we are to understand the mentality of Cumberland and his officers - for his roughness was matched by that of many others - we need to understand the nature of the Jacobite threat, the strength of Jacobitism in Scotland, and its basic causes. There is still, even after Bruce Lenman's recent work, *The Jacobite Rising, 1689-1746*, a need for research in this field. The Hanoverian army on its way north had suffered much from what Cumberland called "blatant disaffection". This was in the lowland north-east, and one might have hoped that Speck would try to explain it. When he observed the easy way in which Edinburgh fell to the Highland army he might also have considered whether the ambivalence of many of its citizens related to dissatisfaction with the working of the Act of Union. Ambivalence also existed in the Highland area. Even men here labelled as "loyal" had a part to play in the success of the rising at first. Macleod of Macleod and Macdonald of Sleat could have passed on the information that the Prince had landed early enough for Cope's march north to have been in time, and let him over the Corrieblack before it was held by his opponents. Instead they sat on the fence for several days, and in the vacuum of power created by excessive legalism in Edinburgh and divided government in London, illegal force

could be used to force men to support the Prince.

## The road to dereliction

By Bruce Lenman

ERIC RICHARDS:

A History of the Highland Clearances  
Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions 1746-1885  
332pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.  
0 8364 496 X

The Highland Clearances occupy a prominent role in the popular view of Scottish history and indeed in the national consciousness of modern Scotland. Yet as Eric Richards points out, the 150 years or more which have passed since the Clearances began to be recognized as a major issue have seen the production of only a handful of serious works on the subject, and too many of them have been little more than a reworking of the first, and still indispensable, major account - Alexander Mackenzie's *The Highland Clearances*, first published in 1883. Mackenzie's work is largely a compilation of contemporary or near-contemporary sources, and is a passionate indictment of the "clearances" which makes his book to the Clearances what Bishop Forbes's *Lyon in Mourning* is to Scottish Jacobitism. Several of the more recent studies of the Clearance period in the Highlands have, however, been of very high quality. Malcolm Gray long ago limned the basic patterns of demographic and economic change. Philip Gaskell in *Modern Scotland* produced a model micro-study of one Highland region, and Jim Hunter's *Making of the Crofting Community*, which was published in 1976, is a very impressive general study of the modern history of the



"Members of the Sketchers' Club" by John Ford, from the book reviewed on page 387. The Sketchers' Club was a sketching club founded in Edinburgh in 1848 by a group of artists, including John and Thomas Fearn. At their meetings the members drew quick sketches of chosen subjects such as "Ambition", "Fear", or "Death", discussed theories of art and drank from toddy runners which had been autographed by each artist with a diamond.

could be used to force men to support the Prince.

Speck has been rather too ready to listen to the myths and bogus history put out by sentimental Jacobitism in the nineteenth century. He refers to "ancient loyalties" of Highlanders to the house of Stuart, which sounds fine but has little relevance in the eighteenth century. More work on the reality in Scotland might have cleared up minor errors as well as major misunderstandings. He passes on the well worn story that the Highlanders, "when they learned that an English flower had been renamed Sweet William... nicknamed one of their most noxious weeds Stinking Billy". It is bold to donate an English phrase to a population mostly monoglot Gaelic

speakers, and Speck could have easily discovered that the name Sweet William dates back to the sixteenth century. The research that he has done - for instance in the Huntingdon Library - enriches parts of his story, but he simply has not done his homework on the Scottish scene.

It should not be a cause for surprise that the rising led to local ruthlessness, even if to few executions; but that there was criticism of Cumberland's standard of humanity. A century and a half earlier it was almost routine for the government of Scotland to issue commissions of fire and sword against one or another Highland clan. By the time of the campaign of Montrose, the cultural divide between Highlands and Lowlands had become so deep that

each side took pride in slaughtering the other. The first breach in the determination of the Lowlanders to treat Highlanders as vermin came belatedly after the massacre of Glencoe when, partly for reasons of political advantage, the parliament of Scotland was brought to disapprove of this instance of "murder under trust". In the early eighteenth century, Edinburgh lawyers were anxious to see the assimilation of Highlanders to lowland society, on lowland terms. The criticism of Cumberland and his officers prepared the way for the later misplaced admiration for a primitive society, as evinced in the Ossian craze. There was a slow but steady spread of standards of humanity in the eighteenth century, of which these events are witness.

# Campaigning in Cuba

By Hugh Thomas

SONIA KEPPEL:

Three Brothers at Havana  
120pp. Salisbury: Michael Russell.  
£6.50.  
0 85955 083 4

The British capture of Havana in 1762 at the end of the Seven Years' War does not usually figure very high in the roll of our past battle honours. Partly this is because, unlike the case with the victories of Quebec and Plassey earlier in that conflict, no permanent acquisition of territory followed. Indeed, Havana was handed back to Spain within a year, at the Peace of Paris, by a cabinet then dominated by the arch "west" of the time, Lord Bute and Henry Fox, who had been pushed into power by George III in place of the "hawks", such as Pitt the Elder.

Partly this neglect of Havana derives from the muddled tactical execution of the operation by the general to command, the third Lord Albemarle, despite the strategic audacity of his scheme. There were, too, many deaths in the British forces in Cuba from disease rather than in combat - 4,708 died of malaria, yellow fever and other sicknesses in the weeks following the operations, as opposed to 560 killed or died of wounds. That is a not untypical proportion in tropical wars of the past, but all the same it meant that the name of "the Havannah" (as we accurately translated "La Habana" until about 1900) sounded a sour note. Dr Johnson remembered the campaign primarily as the occasion when his doctor died, while Boswell was angry whenever he recalled Spain. Gilbert Elliot, the famous defender of Gibraltar in the 1780s, looked back on Havana as merely the place where he earned his reputation.

In Cuban and Spanish history, the fall of Havana is recalled as a great event. It was a defeat, no doubt, but

one which seemed for a hundred years to have brought benefits: access to British goods, slaves at cut prices from Jamaica and other British dominions, connections with British and North American merchants on a scale unprecedented during the old days of smuggling and the South Sea Company's wretched import quota. More recently, nationalistic Cuban historians have questioned whether the subsequent development of the Cuban economy can really be attributed primarily to the British capture of their capital. But, even so, 1962, the two-hundredth anniversary of the defeat, was the occasion, even in Castro's Cuba, then facing the missile crisis, for a fascinating series of volumes devoted to the events of so long before. In Spain, the defender of the Morro Castle, Luis Velasco, brave and unrelenting in battle, has given his name ever since to ships in the Spanish navy.

Sonia Keppel's new book about the capture of Havana is short, scholarly and readable: too short, I should say, given the richness of the material. She has made good use of a first-hand account of the battle written by Thomas Mait (or Mante), a mysterious military historian who may have been a French agent and who was once proposed as a candidate for the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*. The volume also reproduces several of the attractive prints based on the paintings made on the spot by the Gascon-born war artist to the expedition, Dominique Serres. As might be expected from a direct descendant of Lord Albemarle, she tells several engaging anecdotes about the three brothers who dominated the British attack: for not only was Albemarle commander-in-chief on land but his naval brother, the later celebrated Admiral Keppel, was second-in-command of the fleet. A third brother, William, was one of the two divisional commanders. All owed their position to being part of the Duke of Cumberland's "family" of officers. Each, according to eighteenth-century custom, sought, as Cumberland put it in a hasty letter of congratulations, an opportunity to make themselves as "rich as Cresus", from the booty of war. Sonia Keppel's descriptions of the battles are also clear, fresh and interesting.

My regrets are two: first, Sonia Keppel has no space to discuss the commercial consequences of the action, not only for Cuba, which were so considerable, but also for Britain. Regardless of the peace treaty so soon to follow, the fall of Havana to the great new industrial power led to the creation there of a commercial bazaar which diffused benefits throughout South America. The harbour filled with British merchant vessels. John Kenner, the Unitarian commissary-general of the fleet, made a fortune (how great is not known), some of it invested in Rochdale, some in Jamaica. Other large profits were made by most of the merchants in Liverpool interested in the Atlantic trade, among them Charles Townsend's economic adviser, Samuel Touchett - a great cotton merchant who helped to finance Paul's spinning-machine.

A second omission is the consequences of the occupation for Havana's *criollo* leaders. We know from Spanish sources that certain Havana families such as the Montalvos and the Recios de Oquendo collaborated with the British. But how did that collaboration manifest itself? Where were the British built, how did they get on with the local *criollos* of whose dances and religion they were suspicious but whose subsequent prosperity they helped to ensure? Sonia Keppel, unfortunately, has no space to devote to such interesting questions. Her ancestor, it must be granted, had little interest in such matters after the victory. He gained his prize money, of £122,679 10s 1d, a capital sum on which no doubt even a Keppel could jog along comfortably. He eventually invested half of it (£63,000) in an estate in Norfolk, Guldensham, previously owned by a great Lisbon merchant John Brito, who himself had once been Chairman of the South Sea Company. Guldensham today is a nursery, while Collymar, where Albemarle landed, is the site of the Ernest Hemingway Museum. On the other hand, Havana has since 1959 at long last returned apparently to Latin rule.

## African adaptations

By Evelyn O'Callaghan

G. R. DATHOME:

Dark Ancestor  
The Literature of the Black Man in the Caribbean  
286pp. Louisiana State University Press. £12.  
0 8071 075 3

Janet Jahn's *Bibliography of Neo-African Literature*, published in 1965, attempted to define stylistic criteria which would unite the literature of areas like the Caribbean, West Africa and parts of Europe and America into a definite corpus of black writing. He eventually conceded that these criteria are "still under discussion". O. R. Dathome's *Dark Ancestor* seems, initially, to be a similar undertaking. He attempts by painstaking research to reveal the common African heritage in the oral and written literature, proverb, music, song, dance and religious practices of the English, Spanish, French and Portuguese Caribbean.

Dathome characterizes the survival of such African elements, albeit in adapted and stylized forms, as the result of "primary transculturation", in which slaves in the Caribbean blended features of different ethnic cultures, and especially where, with Europeans, were mixed-bloods, managed to preserve their traditions as an alternative to the "weary road to whiteness".

But, since "Afro-Caribbean man is not European, nor indeed is he African", a "secondary transculturation" has to take place, in which a specifically Caribbean identity emerges from the European-African conglomeration. This secondary synthesis is incomplete, and Dathome believes that it will be completed only after

an acceptance and reinterpretation of the black African legacy that slavery cruelly stigmatized. Africa is explored in the literature of the region both as a real extension of experience from old world to new, and as a symbolic and mythical terrain of the imagination. His analysis covers novels such as *Cane* (1963) by the black American Jean Toomer, *Yamba-O* (1933) by the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and *Cumboto* (1969) by the Venezuelan Ramon Diaz Sanchez; poetry by Nicolás Guillén (Cuba), Edward Brathwaite (Barbados), and Derek Walcott (St Lucia); and a collection of oral narrative and song from all points on the Caribbean map. He eventually extends into a definite corpus of black writing. He eventually conceded that these criteria are "still under discussion". O. R. Dathome's *Dark Ancestor* seems, initially, to be a similar undertaking. He attempts by painstaking research to reveal the common African heritage in the oral and written literature, proverb, music, song, dance and religious practices of the English, Spanish, French and Portuguese Caribbean.

The wideness of scope sometimes leads to disorganized presentation and repetition, but several important points emerge. One is that the African "ancestor" survives in all areas of Caribbean life, but had to be reclaimed in literature without recourse to any but European models. The achievement of Caribbean literature therefore lies in its "pliability of tradition", an openness to experimentation and influence. Another theme is the emergence of the mulatto as a symbol of cultural duality. Walcott's "mestizo" group, as he called it, is a "hybrid", this "hybrid" West Indian. And finally, he stresses the fact that a new identity and literary tradition necessitated a language adapted to suit new experiences that had never been part of the European culture - hence the growing popularity and prestige of Caribbean creole languages.

## The American Bar

Saturday night in the American sector. A few lonely faces at empty tables. Bespectacled boys with short hair and Stetsons. Along the edges of a clumsy square dance. Mothered by knees and manured hands. With whooping GIs and Berlin women. Shrieking for burgers and Southern Comfort.

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## Mastering the market

By John Register

GEOFFREY ELLIS:  
Napoleon's Continental Blockade  
The Case of Alsace  
355pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford  
University Press. £17.50.  
0 19 821881 8

More than twenty years ago W. H. Chaloner concluded a review of François Crouzet's monumental work on the effects of the Napoleonic Blockade of Great Britain with the question: what were the effects of the Blockade on the economy of Napoleonic Europe? To Geoffrey Ellis must now go some of the merit of having provided a reply to that question. In his book he sets out to describe the Blockade, not in the traditional terms of a "const system" or a war machine directed against Britain, but in terms of its effects on the heartland of Europe. In his view "the catastrophe of Napoleon plying King Canute with the tide of British trade needs to be redrawn". He presents the Blockade more as what he calls a "market design" than as a war-machine, though he is careful to add that "the implication, emphatically, is not that the market objectives were more important than the military ones, nor that the inland areas were necessarily more crucial than the maritime ports". He simply wants to redress the balance.

In pursuing this aim Dr Ellis could not help but tackle Napoleonic Europe as a whole but only a part of it. In an important part, the Rhine region and the role there of that key

exchange town, Strasbourg. He proceeds with caution, even more so because he is aware that agriculture was still the basis of the European economy in general and of the Alsatian economy in particular, and he is himself concerned mainly with industry and commerce. The introduction to his book and its first chapter (on Alsace and the central government, 1803-07) should be recommended reading for all students of the period. Ellis finds that the pre-revolutionary "golden age" of Strasbourg dear to contemporaries was largely a myth: the town's river trade was endangered by a dispute with Mainz and by competition from Kehl, while the textile industries of Alsace suffered from dwindling exports out of the Revolution. Also he challenges the view that the Revolution's effects on the Alsatian economy were universally disastrous; but more of this in a moment, for to understand his argument, one needs to see what he means by the "market design".

Lacking an economic predominance on the continent commensurate with their military and political mastery, the French tried to build one in the years 1805-07. The idea behind the "market design" is traced back to Delacroix, Sélys, Merlin de Douai and, chiefly, Montgaillard. Broadly viewed, the idea was to establish a cordon of markets to serve the interests of French merchants and manufacturers, while at the same time creating tributaries to boost the flow of revenue for purely French national needs. The difficulty arose from the fact that, while France was supreme in Europe in 1806-07, she was also landlocked (being cut off by the British from the

open sea and from her former colonies). Nevertheless, could she be could British competition be eliminated from continental markets? Ellis dismisses the notion that the Blockade was primarily a "war on cottons", aimed at switching the French over to linen: cotton was fashionable, and Napoleon's Blockade was a war on behalf of his cottons against those of British, Swiss and German origin. But the long-term aims of the Blockade and of its "market design" were more wide-ranging: in Ellis's words, "it was to be at once the executioner of British industrial and commercial supremacy and the harbinger of a new economic order of things in Europe." Outside Italy and Spain, it was in Germany that the French hoped to develop their "markets of replacement" (with particular emphasis on trade links with Frankfurt and Leipzig, as these were still the main internal centres of distribution for industrial goods in central and northern Europe).

The cost of the operation was great on the subject states of the Empire, as the French imposed conditions favourable to their own trade and consumers. Breaching point was reached in 1810-11, when the great financial crisis got under way. However, some of the industrial achievements had a more lasting and beneficial effect. After the broad sweep of the first half of the book, the remaining chapters on Alsace itself are rather pedestrian. Although Ellis is able to show that the region underwent a period of economic expansion from 1807 to 1810 with the industries of Eastern France developing quickly, he does little to enliven

his account of this significant process. With something of the grim determination of those peasant women who force-feed geese in order to make *paté*, Ellis inflicts the contents of his file-cards on the reader. The result is a welter of facts and figures about wines, tobacco, tanneries, clock-making, and *toiles peintes* (with a further twenty pages in the form of appendices to be digested at leisure). The reader begins to greet with some relief statements like that on page 183: "the key indicator of industrial momentum in the Haut-Rhin was calico-printing, and I have found no solid evidence in the prefectural statistics of any marked arrest of the expansionary trend during the second half of 1808." (Fortunately is not a typical example of the author's style.)

## The festive spirit

By Richard Mackenney

EDWARD MUIR:  
Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice  
356pp. Princeton University Press.  
£12.45.  
0 691 05325 1

Public ritual is an important aspect of the myth of Venice, the myth of the perfect constitution which ensured political and social stability, and Edward Muir's book on the subject has been eagerly awaited. But *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* is, alas, a disappointment.

Professor Muir's theme is the construction by the Venetian patriciate of a political ideology through the "sophisticated manipulation" of public ceremonial. In civic ritual, Muir finds the philosopher's stone which transmuted Venetian history into Venetian myth, but he fails to convince because myth and ritual took so large in the book and reality so little. The early assertion that "a myth is no less real than the empirical facts of economic and social history" is respectable enough, and such an approach might have produced exciting insights, but when discussing a myth, it is fatal to ignore social and economic realities if it is to be properly understood.

Muir argues that "the early growth of Venice had probably encouraged parish-consciousness" and concludes that the parishes lost a protracted struggle with "the central city of St Mark" which "competed for the attention of the populace". This is pure speculation. The significance of the parochial unit in Venetian, Italian, or even European, life before the Counter-Reformation is difficult to establish, and claims that parishes were "a major source of public alms" should be treated with caution. Some Venetian confraternities (*scuole piecole*, not *scuole piccole* as they appear here in the text) certainly drew members from all over the city. The evidence used by Muir is a parish festival of obscure origin, the "Festa delle Marie", which became a public procession in the fourteenth century. The author asserts that this development was the result of an attack on parochial traditions by the centralizing patriciate, but he cites no government decision to support this view, merely laws which aimed at eliminating the disorders that accompanied the festivities. The early ceremonies may well have changed character because devotional life in the parish was too weak to support it.

Economic motives cannot be ignored in any sphere of Venetian life, yet the economics of ceremony are never analysed. A discussion of the Assumption Day festivities (the *Senso*) occupies an important place in the book. Muir acknowledges that these were accompanied by a fair which lasted for a fortnight, but for all the Venetian traditions he does discuss, he misses one of the most striking: the capacity to profit from tourists. It seems quaint to speculate, even in a footnote, that a parade of courtesans reflected a "fertility of images" when the reality may well have been that festivals were good business for all those with something to sell.

In making the "land aspect" of the Blockade more prominent than its "sea aspects" in this important book, Dr Ellis has not only skewed the balance, but also shown us the Blockade was not an unqualified failure. If the sample chosen, namely Alsace, may appear insufficient, the fault is not the author's. He has shown the way, as Crouzet did before him; others will now have to look at Italy, Spain, and the remaining parts of Napoleonic Europe to test further the validity of his stimulating conclusions.

## FICTION

## Letting down daddy

By Michael Hofmann

WALTER ABISH:  
How German Is It  
252pp. Manchester: Carcanet New Press. £6.95.  
85635 396 5

Walter Abish's last novel, *Alphabetical Africa*, worked with de- and then re-construction. Tony Tanner expounded it in *Granta*:

In chapter A, only words beginning with A can be used. In chapter B, words beginning with B, A and so on. Then we are taken backwards through the alphabet, returning to A once more.

How German is it seems more conventional, but it too reveals traces of a tight mechanical organization - albeit one that is formal and conceptual, rather than sheerly alphabetical. At many points, the book reminded me of a spiral poetic form such as the *sestina* or *terza rima*. Certain words recur at intervals throughout the book, in different contexts that give them almost a punning sense - as happens in the *sestina*. Thus Dürer's name occurs as a valid reason for visiting Germany, as a subject for study and in "a Dürerlike face" in a crowd. It transpires, moreover, that not only did the hero's family at one time possess "six drawings and

watercolours by Dürer", but the hero also claims to be descended from the artist himself. Other recurring words and names include the magazine *Treue*, the philosopher Brumhold, "Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte", familiarity and summer. These emerge as landmarks in Abish's sealed-down, fictionalized model of Germany.

The two principal figures are the two Hargensu brothers - Abish's nomenclature throughout is derivative - Ulrich, a writer with lofty-wing sympathies, and Helmut, a fashionable architect. The other *drumatis personae* are a score of friends, relatives, friends' relatives and so on. It would be hopeless to attempt to list them - not because the book is in any way confusing or hard to follow, but because the inevitable interconnection of people is one of the sinister hallmarks of Abish's fiction.

It seems that everyone either knows everyone else already, or gets to meet them very soon. When a new character is introduced - like Franz, the Hargensu's former manservant, or Egon and Gisela, a swinging jet-set couple - we already know who they are, and what place they occupy in the lives of the other characters. Thus, even as the plot expands to take in more incidents and relationships, what the reader feels is a growing sense of claustrophobia. *How German Is It* resembles a nightmarish detective story in which Ulrich, the seeker after truth, finds himself powerless and irrelevant for long stretches, and, suddenly, interminably, turned on by what he thought he was pursuing. While things outside him continue to ramify, with the appearance of further characters, bizarre twists and coincidences, the real story becomes more and more simple until finally Ulrich is seen as the representative of a generation that is guilty of a massive Oedipal betrayal.

Having himself turned state evidence and put a group of terrorists behind bars, Ulrich realizes that he is diametrically opposed to his father - one of the heroic officers who conspired against Hitler and were put to

Only the names reveal which character is speaking or acting, since none of them has a tone of voice or a distinctive manner. This would perhaps have mattered less had there been some interesting state of mind pervading the novel. After all, no character of Kafka's has a tone of voice or mode of action that is not generated independently, by the flush of anxiety that streams through the writing. But Meschery's prose has all the vagueness and imprecision of the experience that she tries to convey. It is, presumably, significant for a divorced woman that she should have settled with her children among beautiful mountains and simple people, bearing the afflictions of an urban past. Yet this experience is never evoked; the reader gains only a sense of the profound ordinariness of these television-sodden backwoods, whose beauty and isolation seem no more humanly significant than a picture postcard, sent with the words "Having a dull time. Glad you're not here."

Slavery and its impact on the character of an English boy growing to adulthood during the middle years of the eighteenth century are the twin themes of Keith Dewhurst's first novel. Tom Derker's harsh childhood on a bleak Yorkshire hill farm ends abruptly when he is orphaned in horrifying circumstances and passes into the care of his Uncle William, master of a slave ship. Together, they sail for West Africa, where their mutual affection comes under complex strains as the hunt for slaves, first on the Gambia and then a thousand miles south on the Windward Coast, develops. Dingwall, second mate of the *Margaret*, gentlemanly, alcoholic, struggling to keep his soul amid the brutality and degradation, emerges as the polar opposite to the realistic William Derker, but finally gives way to despair and dies at the captain's hand. Tom himself suffers equally when Derker (by now revealed as his true father) seduces an adolescent African girl, Pourathings, for whom Tom has developed a calf-love.

Do this emotional framework Dewhurst builds the rest of his novel. As the action shifts to Antigua, where those slaves that have survived the Middle Passage are sold off to the plantation owners, Tom abandons the *Margaret* and her captain (whom he meets again four years later in tragic circumstances) and plunges into a fresh series of adventures, first as pot-boy in a brothel, then as clerk on the Hanson plantation. Here his unrequited feelings for a daughter of the house come in the end to seem of less account than his growing appetite for black girls - an urge that the complicated interrelationships of Colonel Hanson's alternative families, with their mutual, revealed, and unspoken factor in the story of the island, Fort Tom too, it remains an enduring appeal. Safely back home, he acknowledges the violence that thus finds its outlet. Because he has taken his feelings to the limit "where human flesh is bought and sold" he is a "wounded person" who resembles one of those overzealous who on the Windward Coast put their black brothers into the longboats: the Captains of the Sands, as they are called, who send others into hell but save themselves. "I am every day a Captain of the Sands. I wish that I were Henry Dingwall, but I am not brave enough."

## Aboard the longboat

By J. K. L. Walker

KEITH DEWHURST:  
The Captains of the Sands  
391pp. Cape. £7.50.  
0 224 01619 9

Slavery and its impact on the character of an English boy growing to adulthood during the middle years of the eighteenth century are the twin themes of Keith Dewhurst's first novel. Tom Derker's harsh childhood on a bleak Yorkshire hill farm ends abruptly when he is orphaned in horrifying circumstances and passes into the care of his Uncle William, master of a slave ship. Together, they sail for West Africa, where their mutual affection comes under complex strains as the hunt for slaves, first on the Gambia and then a thousand miles south on the Windward Coast, develops. Dingwall, second mate of the *Margaret*, gentlemanly, alcoholic, struggling to keep his soul amid the brutality and degradation, emerges as the polar opposite to the realistic William Derker, but finally gives way to despair and dies at the captain's hand. Tom himself suffers equally when Derker (by now revealed as his true father) seduces an adolescent African girl, Pourathings, for whom Tom has developed a calf-love.

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death in 1944; that he is, in some sense, party to his execution. In his collusion with a modern Germany intent on suppressing the past, he has aligned himself with Nazism. The book ends with Ulrich telling a psychiatrist that he feels he is not his father's son, and, under hypnosis, raising his right arm in a salute.

With his ever-extending web of characters and his recurring emblems of prosperity - for *ihar* is what the pivotal "sestina" words have in common - Walter Abish describes a society that is ready to sink under the weight of its own pretence. Its challenging emptiness matches the audacity of Abish's writing, his summoning of significant incident from the post-modernist's bag of tricks, with a complete absence of conventional fiction's efforts at  *vraisemblance*: "One day, after a particularly heavy downpour the pavement in front of the Karl-Marx bakery on the Gelgenheimer Strasse in Brumholdstein caved in, exposing a ruptured sewage pipe." In this clever fiction, as in modern Germany, nothing is accidental. Abish continues - in sentences that echo the evasion of war-guilt - "Things like that were bound to happen. They could happen anywhere. No one was really to blame."

Having himself turned state evidence and put a group of terrorists behind bars, Ulrich realizes that he is diametrically opposed to his father - one of the heroic officers who conspired against Hitler and were put to

The tale, however, is never in any danger of developing into a morality. Rather, Dewhurst's social and psychological insights serve to add body to a full-blooded adventure story, conceived on the grand scale. Spread across three continents and a seven-year time-span, with their constantly changing settings and huge cast of characters, the adventures of Tom Derker are an impressive demonstration of the narrative talents that have earned Dewhurst his reputation as one of the most professional of British television dramatists.

The *Anglo-Welsh Review* Number 70, 1982 (edited by Gillian Clarke and Greville Hill, 138pp. Five Arches Press. £1.25, 0003 3405) includes an article, "Channels of Grace: A View of the Earlier Novels of Elym Humphreys", by Roland Mathias and nineteen unpublished letters from W. H. Davies to Edwards Thomas.

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## Imitators and innovators

By Alexander Kazhdan

M. MULLET and R. SCOTT (Editors):  
Byzantium and the Classical Tradition  
256pp. University of Birmingham.  
£5.90.  
0 7044 0420 6

"If one were to ask any educated modern Westerner what was the first idea that associated itself in his mind with the word 'Byzantine', his answer would probably be 'conservatism'." Thus Arnold Toynbee. In 1973 arguing not only against the opinion of the average "educated Westerner" but against a predominant "scientific" generalization as well. Despite a few feeble voices in the wilderness, the scholarly community still regards Byzantium as a stronghold of continuity, tradition or conservatism - whichever term one prefers.

The question is a topical one, and the University of Birmingham's Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies was devoted to it in 1979, of which we now have the Proceedings. The symposium could not return to a simple description of Byzantium as heir to the Greco-Roman and Biblical past. Instead a broad range of divergent ideas was introduced by the participants, the two extreme positions being defended by R. R. Bolgar and Cyril Mango. According to Bolgar, even Christianity was "Antiquity's eldest daughter", although habitually (and in this volume most particularly by H. Hunger) the Christian Church has been contrasted to the classical tradition as a force that modified (if not wholly replaced) the pagan thought. At the other extreme, Mango emphasizes the discontinuity of Byzantium rejecting as a myth the traditional (and Bolgar's) assertion that it was an amalgam of Greek culture, Christianity and the Roman principles of governance and law. With the virtual disappearance of ancient cities in the seventh century, according to Mango, Byzantium became something different from antique civilization, which had been based on the polis.

Mango finds supporters among the authors of several papers dedicated to more specific problems: thus R. Scott postulates a considerable difference between Byzantine and classical historians which consists primarily in the intrusion of the author in Byzantine historiography, whereas the classical historian had no personal stake in his subject-matter. On the other hand, H. Hunger, apparently quoting H. Leiberich's dissertation in which the German philologist demonstrated how Byzantine historians imitated their classical predecessors. So what was typical of Byzantine historiography; was it different or imitative, innovative or traditional, or maybe both at once?

The problem of tradition and discontinuity is an especially difficult one for Byzantinists, since we cannot solve it by the usual method of collecting facts; it requires a philosophical interpretation. Until recently the continuity of Byzantium was taken for granted, and scholars were satisfied by accumulating evidence of Byzantine imitativeness. G. Weiss, in an article published in 1977, was the first to try and prove the existence of such a continuity, and introduced several fundamental concepts. He wrote of structural similarities as opposed to unsubstantial resemblances, of accidental innovations as opposed to crucial shifts, and I think these contrasts provide a methodological clue. We have to ask, among other questions, whether Christianity broadly using ancient words, images and rituals - retained the substance of ancient culture or only "imitated" it; embellishing its new ideas with a conventional language. Bolgar himself acknowledges that the fundamental ideas of Christianity "did not have their roots in pagan thought". If this is so, the Christian Church was a stepdaughter rather than the eldest daughter of Antiquity.

Mango shows that Byzantium often appears distorted by its artificial idiom and artistic conventions, and that because of the conventional language, we perceive it as being much more antique than it really was. But what was the rationale of this disguise? A fortunate accident, an inborn Byzantine yearning for knowledge, or certain vested social interests? We must bear in mind how

socially and politically unstable Byzantine society was and how emphatically Byzantine artists and intellectuals strove to build up an anti-world of eternal stability, a world of unchangeable essences and archetypes worthy of perpetual imitation. Existing within a medieval context and dealing with medieval problems, the Byzantine pretence to be the *Rhōmēiōi* or Romans, to be in accordance with the Roman law and to communicate in the idiom of Thucydides and Plato. In an unstable community this was a form of self-defence.

There is one more question to stress: if Byzantium broke with the ancient tradition, when did this rupture take place? Mango insists that it was in the seventh century, although he admits that the dominant doctrines and opinions of Byzantium had already been established by Christian and Jewish apologists in the first five or six centuries AD. Avrami Camaron draws the line before the crisis of the sixth century, which forms the cornerstone of Mango's theory. The salient process, which he categorizes as the creation of a new notion of the emperor's place in the earthly and divine hierarchies, was already under way in the sixth century and was completed by the early seventh. Is this a contradiction, or did this process have a long history, and was the radical change or caesura in the seventh century heralded during the earlier period by various social and ideological innovations? And did the radical change itself signify the end of all change, so that Byzantium retained the same seventh-century pattern until its destruction in the fifteenth century? Such questions are not clearly raised here, but only hinted at. W. Treadgold calls the mid-ninth century "a period of transition out of ignorance and indifference". His words may be too severe; the so-called Dark Ages were not simply a time of ignorance and indifference, but one in which new social forms and new ideals were fostered. But Treadgold's statement does imply that there was movement and change but only in the transition from Antiquity to Byzantium, but also within the framework of Byzantium itself.

Ordinary people were certainly encouraged to feel a sense of solidarity as both Christians and Venetians. They were given rights of "trans association" (rather than "revelation" in public festivals and their excesses were carefully controlled by laws or drunkenness. Guild records reveal, however, that artisans were very much aware that the "republican" government was as greedy for war and fighting men as any absolute monarch. In short, the synthesis of monarchical and oligarchical principles in Venetian politics produced not republicanism but collective absolutism. Muir suggests as much in his discussion of the way in which dual authority survived the death of the doge, when the role of *senator* was assumed by the *Signori* and not by an individual patrician.

The book is undoubtedly its most informative when describing what Venetians did rather than when behaviour patterns they were following. Moments of clarity include the discussion of how religious and festivals merged into each other, but properties were organized for processions and the significance of different coloured flags on state occasions. Yet even these insights are obscured by statements ranging from the present (the Marriage of the Sea was "a socially meaningful ceremonial relationship") to the silly ("the dual procession was the constitution").

A basic weakness is Muir's failure to confront the serious problems posed by the evidence he draws on. Are descriptions of festivals through different eyes in different epochs and in different records forms a valid index of change? Can we be sure that Venetian ceremonial had become increasingly courtly by the late sixteenth century? Are the comments of well-born Venetians like Cardinal Contarini, or the diarist Sanudo, or those made by honoured visitors like Petrarch and Sir Henry Wotton, like Petrarch and Sir Henry Wotton, our best guide to the significance of public ritual? Were such observations more easily taken in by patrician population? A discussion of source materials might well have replaced the first fifty-five pages of the text with the myopia of Venice drawn exclusively from secondary sources amongst which the works of social anthropologists are more prominent than useful. Techniques borrowed from other disciplines may be used to supplement the historian's archival research but they cannot be expected to replace it.

## Glad you're not here

By Roger Scruton

JOANNE MESCHERY:  
In a High Place  
303pp. Bodley Head. £7.50.  
0 370 30444 6

The action of Joanne Meschery's first novel is set in the mountain country between California and Nevada, and purports to offer an evocation of the hardness and vulnerability of the place and of the discipline which it brings to the life of a divorced woman who moves there from the fast-pools of the coast. Very little happens in the book: a child is lost in snow at the beginning and found frozen at the end, an entertainment conglomerate comes to town in order to develop a resort for winter holidays, a few people gather for gossip, dinner or television. The heroine, who holds herself responsible for the loss of the child - has a kind of breakdown, while her neighbour, an ageing loner who is steeped in the ways of the place, gradually loses his teeth. These events seem to bring the two characters together, and if there is a story I suppose it is the story of their mutual attraction.

Meschery follows certain rude precepts - no telling, only showing; masses of detail; short dialogue punctuated by "he hollered", "she snuffed", "he argued", rather than "he said"; abrupt transitions; any number of scene changes. But this style is dull, there are no striking phrases or images, and it is hard to keep one's attention focused on the book, since, despite the abundance of detail, there is no true evocation of anything: many things are described, but nothing is observed, partly because nothing is imagined: "The boy waved towards the station, then followed Deegan inside, still jabbering about

The novel is written from the viewpoint now of one of them, now of the other: a device which, despite having had the benefit of the Stanford Writing Programme, the Yaddo Corporation, the Iowa Writers Workshop, and the National Endowment for the Arts, all acknowledged in the foreword, Meschery handles with a certain clumsiness - landing herself, in the scenes when the two are together, with simultaneous but emotionally and dramatically incommensurate points of view. Indeed, if this book is anything to go by, it is clear that American creative writing courses do not teach much about literature.

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## The friend in need

By Patricia Craig

MARY HOBSON:  
Poor Tom  
180pp. Heinemann. £6.95.  
0 340 022 7

"Do poor Tom some charity..." This injunction from *King Lear* might have served as an epigraph to Mary Hobson's novel; her Tom, a practical impostor, requires charity in large measure: rooms in other people's houses, incessant succour and attention. His latest victims (after his sister, a man at work, the proprietor of a corner shop and a young couple met in a pub) are Martin and Vivian, an unsatisfactorily married pair on the verge of succumbing to the charms of middle age. The children of this couple have left home, one to drive a van in Leeds, the other to live with a would-be painter to the square. Into the void created by their departure comes Tom, the old school friend whom Martin has never been able to take seriously.

Blood and destruction, on a very small scale, mark Tom's arrival. The weight of his rucksack causes him to topple, smashing a bottle of wine against the breakfast and cutting his hand. This slight mishap establishes his claim to womanly sympathy. When his motorcycle is stolen he is immobilized - symbolically at least. Soon he is making himself at home in the room of Paul (the vice driver, temporarily attached to a Chinese taxiway service), constructing a makeshift kitchen and eating Marmite bars behind a locked door. Tom's

peculiarities are trivial but mildly unsettling: he sleeps, for example, in a khaki woollen balaclava helmet.

Encouraged, perhaps, by the attention paid to his cat hand, Tom goes on to cultivate more ambitious disorders: a burst appendix gains him a spell in hospital, followed by prolonged convalescence at the home of his friends. By now he has lost his job as a laboratory assistant, having resisted promotion to the point of resigning; the prospect of re-employment terrifies him. He refuses to look at perfectly suitable flats which he could afford to buy, trading on the remains of his illness and Vivian's wish to be taken for his ministering angel. A single seedy episode of infidelity has occurred between these two, gratifying to neither and positively inimical to the only true relation available to them: that of caretaker and object of care. "If he were to be excluded from adult passion", Tom has reflected, "he could at least claim the attention due

to a child." Not indefinitely, however. Martin, in whom aspersation has been building, lashes out in a temper: "Tom... staggered and fell." And, in his atop-gap lodging, Tom leans against a warped window-frame and crashes on to a conservatory roof. The balaclava helmet saves him from the worst effects of a broken head.

Poor Tom is a story of interlocking neuroses. Vivian, who lacks an occupational focus, finds one in Tom, who also supplies Martin with a outlet for his irritation. The novel is deftly constructed, and full of small acerbic touches and bleakly comic effects which save it from banality - but only just. Mary Hobson knows how maddening her characters are; but the method she adopts to communicate this quality is too often sketchy and glib. In the end you feel they are all deficient in substance and, as a consequence, in plausibility. It is a notable contribution to cuckoo-in-the-nest literature, though.

## Summer's End

Lock up this summer in a basket of hay. In a tower of sand in the wind's embrace. In a pogy's chalice lock it lightly. Lock it that it may reappear. Sometime you're alone, sometime in winter. Reappear like a scent like a name forgotten. Like a healing sign.

Anne Pennington

Anne Pennington, the distinguished scholar and translator, died in May last year. This poem was found among her papers.